

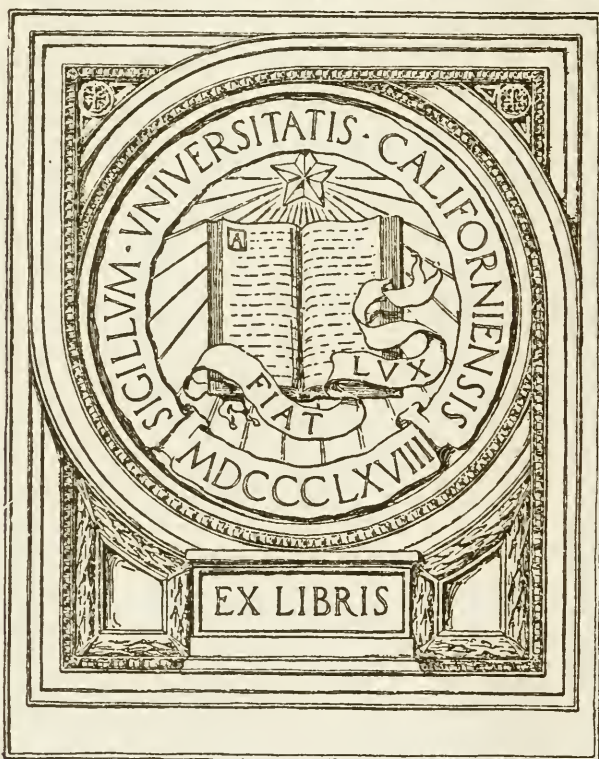


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SIX LITTLE PRINCESSES

Esther Levy.
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GIFT OF
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Six Little Princesses

and

What They Turned Into

And Other Fairy Tales

By

The Author of "Susy's Six Birthdays"

Illustrated

by E. P. Pratt



New York and Boston
H. M. Caldwell Company
Publishers

GIFT OF

Ella Sterling Mighel

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SIX LITTLE PRINCESSES.

I.

THE QUEEN'S WISH.

ON a clear, frosty day of the twentieth winter of her life, the beautiful Queen Anitta sat in her sledge enveloped in ermine, and inhaled the air with smiles of satisfaction. Before and behind her a retinue of attendants made a brilliant parade of gay trappings and many-colored garments, which contrasted finely with the white snow over which they flew.

The young queen had almost everything in the world to make her happy. The king gratified her every wish, as far as it was possible to do so; her people always received her with acclamations; when she was tired of living in one palace she could go to another. It follows, then, as a natural consequence, that she was happy.

By no means. She had one wish that had never been gratified, and never would be; for whereas the king delighted in dogs and horses, her great pleasure was in little children, and of these she had none. Now it might seem, at first blush, that queens are the last persons in the world to possess such tastes. It is generally understood that they spend their lives, during the day, sitting on thrones, with golden

crowns on their heads, which serve them at night as luxurious nightcaps, and act as constant reminders that the heads that wear them are heads of no common sort. It is true we have the highest authority for the fact that there once existed on earth a queen who went into the kitchen, like other mortals, to eat bread and honey, while the king counted out his money in the parlor. But such queens are rare, and so is the queen of our story, who actually fancied that even on the stately floors of palaces the patter of little feet would be musical. In fact, Queen Anitta was, and always had been, an exception to all rules. She had been known to jump into her carriage with a hop and a skip which sent her crown rolling; nobody knows where; she had been seen to laugh with a fresh girlish heartiness that made her governess turn pale; and once, but this fact once published, had been suppressed by the king, she had snatched a gypsy-looking baby, with cheeks like two peaches, from its mother's arms, and actually kissed it! It is to be hoped and believed that there are not many such queens on the face of the earth, for hearts are inconvenient things on state occasions, and the life of royalty is all state.

On this particular morning she was all smiles, for she had just completed negotiations with a poor woman, who, for the sake of getting rid of some trouble, and gaining some ease, had consented to give up to her a great fat baby, who was straightway to be made a prince.

On reaching home the queen sent a special message for her dearest friend, the Countess Reynosa, to whom she wished to display her new possession.

"The child is a perfect monster!" cried the countess, the moment her eyes fell upon this huge

mass of flesh. "In the first place, it is all body, without a soul of the smallest conceivable style. In the second place, its heart, if it has any, is as hard as the nether millstone. How can it be otherwise, since it was born of a mother who was willing to sell her own flesh and blood for money?"

She who spake these sagacious words was not six feet high, as one might suppose, nor was her hair silvered by age. She was exactly one year older than the queen, and so little that if she had not been a woman, she would have been a humming-bird. Her eyes were like two stars, and saw almost as much; as to her penetration, it was almost supernatural.

To keep the baby after she had pronounced against it was not to be thought of. The whole kingdom would be up in arms at such an error. The creature was accordingly wrapped in one of the royal blankets, handed over to a royal page, and restored to its mother, who, as she was allowed to keep the price of her goods, and the goods into the bargain, was tolerably content with her share of the operation.

The queen, however, sat pensively in a chair whose back was twelve feet high, her hands folded in her lap, and regretted that with so many excellent qualities, her dear friend, the countess, possessed such sagacity.

"No doubt I should have awakened a soul in the child in time!" she said. "And as for a heart! ah, Reynosa, you do not know what it is to have one so empty as mine."

"Nonsense!" cried the countess, whose bump of reverence was as hollow as a teacup, "as if at your age you could instruct me on the subject of human affections! It is not to babies in general I object,

but to this infant in particular. Leave the matter to me. I will fill your heart—with a vengeance.”

For answer the queen jumped down from her seat of state, and looked and acted so much like common people that the prime minister had to be sent for to remind her that she was uncommon.

Meanwhile, the countess, nibbling at a bit of straw, tossed her head and floated out of the palace and into her chariot, whether on wings or on her feet it would be hard to say. In less than an hour she came back with a basket, which, with mock ceremony and profound salutations, she placed at the feet of the queen.

“May it please your majesty,” said she, “here is a little baby—I entreat pardon—a babe, which I have the honor to present to your majesty on bended knees.”

The “babe” was a charming little creature, with a brown skin, under which the red blood could be seen as plainly as under the fairest; it had large brown eyes, a pretty mouth, and dimples where other people have knuckles.

“This child has a heart,” continued the countess, resuming her usual gay tone, “for when I took it from its mother’s arms she gave three such terrific wails that I nearly let it fall to the floor. As for tears, the poor thing is wet with them still, as if it had been out in the rain.”

“I cannot accept a child thus torn from its mother,” said the queen, shrinking back.

“Listen before you decide!” cried the countess. “The mother lay upon her deathbed. She but parted with her child a few days in advance. She is overwhelmed with gratitude that she can leave it in such hands.”

Thus reassured, the queen gave herself up to

the enjoyment of her new acquisition, while she did not forget to send to the dying mother every solace her tender heart could conceive of. Nurses were at once sought, dainty garments replaced the coarse clothing of the child, and several apartments were made ready for its use. An hour sufficed to transform the unconscious little sleeper into a princess. Pure water, perfumes, white robes, a host of attendants: are not these advantages equal to royal blood?

It was necessary, however, to select names for the child. While the daughter of an obscure widow one name had, it is true, sufficed. But here lies the distinction between plebeians and aristocrats. The one may be Polly or Sally. The other must bear the titles of her ancestors, and stagger through life with their honors upon her. In this case there were, of course no ancestors. Children born in poverty have only fathers and mothers. But what the baby lacked the queen possessed, and she endowed it with all the best names of her own high-born race. But for everyday wear and tear it was only the Princess Novella.

For some weeks the queen was in raptures over her child; and its infantine graces, wherein it bid defiance to ministers of state, and all the principalities and powers on earth, afforded her infinite delight. Even the king felt some respect for a being who at so tender an age ventured to yawn while he was addressing it, and to seize his nose in its hands, and pull his hair without the smallest compunction. He began to flatter himself that such royal airs denoted royal blood, and it was not long before he almost forgot its plebeian origin.

Now everybody knows that the gratification of one want does not preclude the uprising of another.

The human soul is hydra-headed ; what you crop off here will sprout out there. Consequently the queen began to say to herself that a princess was next to no princess at all, and that one more at least would be necessary to complete her felicity.

When the Countess Reynosa heard this piece of news she shook her sagacious little head and said :

“ Yes, yes, I thought so ! ”

Indeed, it was quite impossible that anything under the sun should happen of which she had not thought. “ This time, I suppose, it must be a prince ! ” she said to the queen.

But the queen declared that, young and inexperienced as she was, she could not venture on the fearful responsibility of undertaking the charge of boys.

“ But what does the king say ? ” asked the countess.

“ The king, alas, is so absorbed in his horses, his dogs, and his hunts, that he leaves all domestic arrangements to me. If I choose to adopt as many princesses as he possesses four-footed favorites, he will not thwart me.”

The countess shook her head again. But what this shake portended she would not explain. Only it was not long before she brought to the palace a man who looked frightened out of his wits, and who had something in his hand tied up in a large red cotton handkerchief.

In his terror at the idea of speaking face to face with a live queen, he gave her to understand a number of impossible things, the most important being the fact that this handkerchief contained an infant who not only possessed no parents, but never had had any, and was now left destitute and forlorn to his care, he being its uncle in a remote way.

The queen received the gift with as much delight as if it were the only baby on earth. The process of turning it into a princess of the blood royal was gone through with, and in a few hours there slumbered by the side of her dusky sister a fair-haired, pale little maiden, whom everybody treated with respect, and called the Princess Mosella.

To make a long story short, the queen took such pleasure in her children that she could not rest satisfied with only two. In a very short space of time the Countess Reynosa had ransacked the kingdom to such purpose that six little cradles rocked gallantly in as many royal nurseries. Dark-haired and light-haired, blue-eyed and black-eyed, there they were, and, for all they knew or cared, had a king for their father and a queen for their mother.

They all bore the same marks of royalty in a supreme disregard of place and position; every one of the six took its turn at discomfiting the prime minister and routing the secretary of state; and there was not one who thought the king made for any earthly purpose but to pick up their toys as fast as they threw them down.

When the queen had made all the dainty fingers in the land embroider garments sufficiently costly and beautiful for the purpose, she resolved to have a grand christening, and display her daughters to the court.

All the nobles and grandees were invited to witness this remarkable sight. The whole kingdom was in commotion. The men put on their court garments, and the women exhausted themselves in inventing new dresses. Some of the ladies had to have their hair dressed a week beforehand, and it is to be presumed did not go to bed during that period; silks and satins and laces and diamonds

formed the staple of conversation, and filled all the heads and hands that were not already full. One would need to write a whole book if one would describe the crush and the rush, the wear and the tear, the destruction and the ruin.

The end of it all was ten extra *Court Journals*, and six princesses, each with more names than it had fingers and toes. Somehow, in spite of the splendor of the scene, the display of jewels, and the destruction of robes, the young creatures got actually christened, and were borne away in triumph to their own domains.

As to the presents laid at their unconscious feet, and which they all received with that sublime indifference peculiar to high breeding, time would fail to enumerate the tithe of them. It is only on those who already possess everything that costly gifts are lavished. What should poor people do with such things ?

The Countess Reynosa alone, of all the friends of the king and queen, presented the royal infants with no gift whatever. One shake of her sagacious head answered the purpose and explained this omission. Ah ! what a thing it is to have a reputation ! The only difficulty is when one possesses without deserving it. Then indeed one has to float one banner in public and fight under another in secret. For instance, when one has the credit of being amiable, can one box everybody's ears when one is out of humor with everybody ?

II.

THE COUNTESS' GIFTS.

AFTER the grand christening was over, things subsided gradually into the old routine. The six babies were washed and dressed, and taken out for an airing every morning; what happened to one happened to all without regard to any natural differences of constitution. And as the queen chose to dress them exactly alike, and blue was her favorite color, Novella, who was as brown as a gypsy, had to wear sashes that made her look yellower than ever. However, she cared not a whit what she wore, and in process of time she had a mouthful of little white pearls intended for teeth, that made her as pretty as her fair sister Mosella. A charming little set they were, and in her devotion to them the queen was in danger of forgetting affairs of state and all the formalities due to her station. It was whispered abroad that as soon as the princesses got upon their feet there were seven children in the palace instead of six—the queen being coaxed into romping with her pets instead of training them in the way they should go.

The Countess Reynosa, meanwhile, studied the children while the queen amused herself with them, and made herself mistress of the characters and dispositions of each. She then announced that her long-delayed gifts were now to be presented. Not a little curiosity was felt to know what these gifts might be. The *Court Journal* stopped the press in

order to learn the news, and to convey it at once to all parts of the kingdom. If a nod of the head of the countess was significant, what must it be with her presents ! She was well known to be very rich, and to possess old family jewels of fabulous value, and as she had taken a vow never to marry, what could be more natural than that she should divide these treasures among the princesses ? What then was the consternation of the whole court when her gift to Novella proved to be nothing but a pen !

To Mosella, nothing daunted by the suppressed whispers of amazement about her, she presented an old piano that had stood unmolested in one corner of her palace half a dozen years.

To Reima, the third sister, she gave a box of colors and a handful of pencils.

To Papeta she offered all the half-worn sheets her own singing-master had left behind him, when he had fled from her palace declaring that mortal man never heard such a voice.

To Moina, a pair of scissors, a thimble, and some needles.

Last of all it was the turn of Delicieuse, and the little creature was led by her nurse to receive what every one felt was to be the crowning gift of all. For the child held every heart at her fingers' ends ; whether it was her extraordinary beauty, or her sweet, graceful manners and winning way, or all together, she was the favorite of the king, the idol of the queen, the pride and the gloory of the whole court. As she approached the countess, curiosity made everyone silent, yet even the grim prime minster would have been glad to press the charming creature to his heart. A murmur of surprise and displeasure ran through the court when the countess

stooped and kissed the young princess, and then only gave her one of her sagacious nods !

Delicieuse herself seemed perfectly satisfied. She rejoined her sisters with a brow as serene as ever, and took leave of the king and queen with her usual grace and sweetness, soon disappearing among the little princesses, each of whom contended for the privilege of walking hand in hand with her.

The queen, used as she was to the vagaries of Reynosa, found it hard to submit to this new freak, looking, as it did, so much like child's play. But as she felt a sincere respect and affection for her, and was, besides, too kind-hearted to wish to wound even an enemy, if she had one, she thanked her friend for her interest in her children, and promised that her gifts should be carefully preserved and cared for.

“By no means !” cried the countess. “Each child is to have charge of its own gift. Otherwise my object in presenting it will be defeated.”

The queen smiled and yielded. It was not really worth while to dispute about such trifles. The ancestral diamonds of the countess would have been quite another affair. She had quite forgotten the whole thing, when one morning she saw Novella perched at a table in a high chair, so intent upon business as to take no heed of her presence.

On approaching the child, what was her surprise to find the little creature engaged in copying, from a book before her, the letters of the alphabet. As, thus far, no attempt had been made to educate the young princesses, this spectacle was wonderfully quaint, and the queen, after gazing upon it a moment in silence, burst forth in a merry laugh. The attendants hastened to explain that the princess

would have ink, and paper, as well as the pen the countess had given her, and that the delight of the child in their use made it quite impossible to keep her robes and her hands in the immaculate condition due to her rank.

As to the princess, she could hardly spare time to look at the queen or answer her questions. Her little hands trembled with eagerness, and her eyes glowed like suns and stars, as she formed the rude characters upon the paper, sighed at their want of perfection, and patiently studied her model.

The queen could not help sympathizing with the child's pleasure, though she wished the countess had not, by her gift, suggested an amusement that made its fingers such a sight to behold.

Passing into the next apartment she found Moina seated on the carpet, with half a dozen dolls about her, and a little workbasket by her side.

In her small white hands she held the scissors given her by Reynosa, and fashioning a garment, tiny in form, but exquisite in shape. Delicieuse, with her arms full of dolls, sat beside her, looking on.

"What are you two little darlings playing?" asked the queen, stooping down to caress them.

"I have such nice things!" cried Moina. "See! scissors, thimble, needles, thread! I am making new dresses for all the dolls in the palace."

And as she spoke she used the scissors with a deft and womanly air that set the queen laughing once more with that musical laugh of hers that would have scandalized the court.

"I am doing nothing," said Delicieuse, rising, and throwing herself into the arms of her royal mother. "When Moina has dressed all the dolls we shall play with them together."

Meanwhile, she wound the queen's curls around her fingers, kissed her twenty or thirty times, and looked like a little white angel that never soiled its fingers with ink, or littered the carpet with scraps. "What a beautiful, what a lovely child she is!" thought the queen, and then, with the little princess by the hand, she passed on to the room devoted to Reima.

Here she found new cause for surprise and amusement, for Reima had spread out her box of colors, and was making vigorous daubs on an enormous sheet of paper, with such zeal that she did not hear the approach of her visitors.

Her nurse came forward to excuse herself for permitting such employment. She declared that all the interest the princess now took in her toys was as models for copy; her dolls, in fact, had all been turned into lay figures, and were arranged in attitudes for the purpose.

After greeting the child, and bidding her good-morning, the queen, who began to find the aspect of things growing serious, proceeded to the apartment of the Princess Mosella. As she approached it she heard sounds not, on the whole, unmusical, peeling from it, and beheld this small scrap of humanity gravely occupied at her piano, with the air of a master. Near her stood Papeta, music in hand, singing in a clear, sweet voice that transfixed the queen upon the threshold. *Delicieuse* ran up to them with kisses and caresses. The two little mites stopped playing and singing, to glance upon her with condescension, and to return her caress, though with a somewhat preoccupied air. The concert then proceeded.

At this moment the Countess Reynosa came flying in; she fluttered from one to another, saluted-

the queen with mock reverence, kissed Mosella and Papeta, and then snatching at Delicieuse, she folded the charming child in her arms in a transport of affection.

It was now the hour for the morning airing of the princesses, and with great labor their attendants were coaxing, threatening, and conjuring them to tear themselves away from their employments, in order to be arrayed for the purpose. Moina begged for one moment in which to put in order the little garment she was cutting; Reima was afraid someone would touch her colors in her absence; Novella wanted to finish her page, and Mosella and Papeta their song. Delicieuse alone, having nothing of such vast importance to do, thought of the drive with pleasure, and was docile under the infliction of dressing.

At last, after long bustle and parade, during which some tears were shed, and some frowns displayed, all six were got comfortably off, the scraps were gathered from Moina's carpet, Novella's pen and ink were put away, the piano closed, and the music laid in order. Reima's possessions alone remained untouched; she had won a promise to that effect before she could be persuaded to leave her treasures.

The queen led Reynosa to her own apartments, and the two sat down to talk like other mortals.

"Well!" cried the countess, "I wish you joy of your five geniuses!"

"My five geniuses!" repeated the queen.

"Oh, I am willing to allow that there are six, if that pleases you better. Indeed, one may almost say with truth that Delicieuse is a genius as well as her sisters. For her power of winning everybody's heart is almost like an inspiration."

“What can you mean, you barbarous creature?” cried the queen.

“Only that Novella will one day astonish you with her writings, Mosella and Papeta with their music, Reima with her paintings, and Moina with a skill only inferior to theirs because so practical in its character.”

The queen hardly knew what to say. Reynosa, however, hummed a tune, and went and looked out of the window with a nonchalant air.

“I suppose it is too late to help it now,” the queen said at last.

“It is, indeed,” replied the countess, returning to her seat. “Genius may not be needed by princesses; in fact, I can see that it may have its inconveniences. But you must remember that your daughters were not made to order. When nature endowed them with these choice gifts she did not know that you were going to present them with royalty also.”

“But they are still very young. Education may modify, if it does not positively alter, their tastes.”

“I advise you to try,” replied the countess dryly, and she gave one of those dreadful little nods that mean just the contrary.

For once in her life, which, as she was a queen, seems rather singular, her majesty determined to have her own way, nod who might. She summoned all the wisest, most skillful masters in the land to the palace, and directed them to take charge of the education of the princesses forthwith. Their studies were to be alike, and they were to learn everything save needlework, and all were to become alike accomplished.

The princesses were not angels; they were only geniuses. They cried and pouted over their lessons

very much like other children, wore out an unaccountable number of books, used up a stock of stationery, and thrummed six pianos out of tune. Moina learned to read and to write, and got a smattering of a number of other things. She drew and painted horribly, and played and sang like a machine. Reima learned all that Moina did, and a good deal beside, but it was through floods of tears that she fixed in her brain the tasks assigned her. Most of her masters found her very dull, and thought it a mercy that she could hide this dullness under the glitter and show of royalty. But he whose happy lot it was to guide her fingers over the canvas deplored the fate that had made her a princess, and envied her the talents she did not need.

Mosella and Papeta learned also a little of everything. But they flew from books as birds fly from cages. Mosella made her piano obedient to every throb of her heart. Papeta sang in a way that almost drew angels down to listen.

As to Novella, she picked up everything with enthusiasm. Her paintings were not execrable like those of Moina, and music was not without some charm for her. She devoured rather than read the books selected for her, and outran the tasks assigned by her masters, in her eagerness to know more. Yet she contrived to be in disgrace half the time. Her fingers, that should have been white, were always black; her dresses had an innate faculty of getting torn and soiled; she never saw anything an inch before her nose, and was constantly tumbling about in a most inglorious way. As to etiquette, no mortal could teach her the meaning of the word. She never knew where to put her hands, never sat straight

in her chair, never looked as if she had just come out of a bandbox.

Delicieuse, meanwhile, learned nicely of everything a little. She had some respectable drawings, could sing and play with a certain precision, and never vexed her masters by dullness or inattention. Her sisters all fancied her to be vastly superior to themselves, since she was as beautiful as a fairy, never got into disgrace, said her lessons without ever a failure, and wrote her copies with never a blot. Withal she had caresses and gay words for everybody, and was always in good humor.

Thus the childhood of the six sisters passed away amid the sorrows and the joys, the tears and the smiles that are inseparable from that period of life. At sixteen a more charming little group could be found nowhere. Masters attended them no longer, petty childish follies were outgrown; they loved each other dearly, and were seldom separated. By degrees, in spite of the efforts of the queen to make them all alike, each fell into the place designed for her by nature. Moina sat all day with her scissors or her needle in her hand, and fashioned her own dresses and those of her sisters. She could not find time to read, she said, nor to practice, and wondered how others could. She made herself and the other princesses look as if their garments grew upon their youthful figures. Once having worn one of her dresses, they quarreled with their seamstress, complained of being pinched here and pulled there, and kept her completely busy and completely happy. The queen no longer resisted the tide; she had a spacious apartment fitted up for the use of the princesses, and sat among them, watching them with admiration and delight. In her cor-

ner Moina sat at her work, saying little, but hearing all that went on, and accomplishing a great deal. Reima had her easel not far off; no one was allowed to touch her portion of the sanctuary, and her skillful hand produced in exquisite colors the creations of her brain. Mosella and Papeta sang and played and composed, and made the lofty apartment resound with wondrous harmony. Novella, in a remote corner, sat at her desk and wrote. Sometimes as her pen flew over her paper, she laughed aloud, and sometimes she cried; then when the mood was over, and the inspiration fled, her sisters liked to rouse her flagging spirits by making her read aloud to them the tales and verses she had written. While she read, Moina worked patiently and cheerfully in her corner, and Reima painted in hers, while Mosella and Papeta copied music in theirs. As for Delicieuse, she wanted no corner of her own, but was any and everywhere as her mood led her. Sometimes she watched Moina while she fashioned the dresses destined for her own graceful figure, beguiling the time with lively chat; at others she hovered near Reima, admiring the skill and the enthusiasm with which she pursued her art. She was welcomed by all, for as she had no decided taste of her own, she had no hobbies to thrust in people's way, nor was she ever so busy that she was not glad at any moment to listen to Novella when she read, or to Papeta when she sang. Her facile nature made her drop whatever she had in hand, to seize whatever the world threw at and asked her to catch.

Nothing could be more delightful than this innocent family group; it came near being a little heaven below.

But the king complained that the queen kept

his charming daughters all to herself. He had pretty nearly forgotten that they were not his own children; and sometimes, when a little off his guard, was known to boast that Delicieuse had inherited her beauty and her extraordinary power to please from his mother, the illustrious Queen Ariana. Reima's love of art was also derived from one of his ancestors, as were the musical powers of Mosella and Papeta. As to Moina, that good and useful creature, he was sure he should have had some relative precisely like her had not royal etiquette forbidden the display of such homely talents. The queen found these little delusions of his somewhat amusing, but on the whole they gave her pleasure, as showing that the king was proud and fond of their adopted children. To gratify him she had them introduced at court, where, arrayed in the graceful folds of Moina's disposing, and the charms of a simple, unspoiled girlhood, they were received almost with acclamations. The Countess Reynosa's sagacity in the choice of six such rare maidens was the admiration of everyone; people said there never was a little head so full of wit as hers.

III.

A WICKED FAIRY.

AFTER a dazzling evening, spent in the most brilliant society, the sisters went to bed, tired and more or less out of sorts. Moina was the first to awake next morning. She rose at once, and after a time, took her work and sat down with it in her usual place. Many costly and beautiful fabrics lay scattered about her, from which she was to fashion new robes for the second appearance of herself and sisters at court. The scissors moved in her skillful hands as by magic; she seemed to cut and slash at random, while she really used them with precision. Presently she took her pretty golden thimble from her basket, and would have placed it on her finger but that some substance entirely filled it.

“How tiresome!” said she, and with the point of her scissors she picked at the obstruction a little impatiently. Moina was not an angel. She was only a kind-hearted little workwoman. She recoiled in some alarm when, at the touch of the scissors, there flew from the thimble what she at first supposed to be a horrible winged insect. It lighted on the edge of the table, and looked at her out of two large, greenish eyes. She saw now that it was no insect, but a diminutive, fearfully ugly little creature in human shape: its wings suggested the idea of a cherub, its face that of a demon,

“Poor child !” it began, in a voice as fine and as sharp as a number twelve needle; “here you sit, stitch, stitch, stitch, while your sisters preserve their beauty by lying in bed. How exquisite your work is ! How industrious and patient you are ! It is strange that the world overlooks such merit as yours.”

“I do not work in order to please the world,” returned Moina, recovering from her terror. “I do so because I have no talent like my sisters, and because I thus make myself useful to them.”

“I know how unselfish you are,” replied the other, whom we will call Neida; and her hideous yellow face grew yellower as she spoke. “It is on this very account I feel such sympathy with and pity for you. I saw you last night sit alone and neglected, while all the young princes and noble-men paid homage to your sisters.”

Now, Moina, absorbed in the novelty of the brilliant scene about her, had not asked herself how much attention she had received, nor felt herself neglected. But it is the easiest thing in the world to persuade people that they are miserable, and that justice is not done them.

“It is true,” she replied thoughtfully, “that I sat alone and neglected nearly the whole evening. People gathered about my sisters, and quite forgot me.”

“You were too modest, and allowed your sisters to put forth all their efforts to shine, and to win admiration. And not one of them would have been fit to be seen but for you. The Princess Novella never knows what she has on; as long as she can scribble as if her life depended upon it, she would be content to go clothed in sackcloth. With the Princesses Mosella and Papeta, it is al-

most as bad. The Princess Reima has no taste, and never has put on a sash otherwise than awry. As to the Princess Delicieuse, she is a mere butterfly—all wings and gay colors; well enough to look at and admire, but the idlest, most useless creature imaginable. Think, now, that this worthless character attracts everybody, while your sterling virtues are despised.”

Moina might have replied, if she had had her wits about her, that to be admired is not the main business of life. But she only threw down the robe she had just cut so tastefully, saying:

“My sisters shall see that, if I have not their talents and their beauty, I am yet of some importance, after all. I will not sit at work all day like a common seamstress.”

Neida, quite satisfied with her morning’s work, flew away, leaving Moina sitting moping in her chair. Some insects, not content with stinging their victims, must needs leave their sting behind. Neida took care to leave hers wherever she went.

When Mosella came to her piano half an hour later, she found Moina seated at it, making all sorts of discords. She stood waiting a few moments, expecting her sister to rise and give her the place she always occupied at this time. As she stood, Moina’s execution really distressed her.

“Moina, dear,” she said at last, “music does not seem to be your forte—does it?”

“It is time I became something more than a mere seamstress,” said Moina, drumming away. “Why should you monopolize all the music?”

Before Mosella had time to answer, her attention was attracted by a strange buzzing at one of the windows.

“What hideous noise is that?” thought she;

and she ran to the window, where Neida was making these sounds in order to draw her away to this corner.

“Good-morning, my child,” she began; “are you feeling quite yourself after last night’s fatigue?”

“I was not much fatigued,” Mosella replied in great surprise.

“Indeed! People said that being forced to play for such a length of time must have been wearisome. Indeed, it seemed almost cruel to let you exert yourself so much where so few listened to your performances.”

Mosella colored.

“I did not observe that people failed to listen,” she said. “However, I enjoyed playing because I am so fond of music.”

“But is it not strange that, rather than listen to such music as yours, everybody should run wild after that pretty sister of yours, who hasn’t a talent or an accomplishment of any sort?”

“Do you mean the Princess Delicieuse?” asked Mosella. “Ah, but she has something better than talent. She has the art of making everybody like her.”

“That is just what I am saying. Real genius like yours passes unnoticed, unrewarded; while a pleasing face, a few soft purrs, a pat of a velvet paw, draw crowds of worshippers.”

“I wish, indeed, that I were as charming as Delicieuse,” said Mosella. She forgot, for the moment, all the unalloyed delight she had had in the exercise of the gift nature had lavished upon her. To win admiration and applause seemed now the only object worthy pursuit.

She stood looking listlessly from the window,

that poor resource of the disconsolate; and Neida flew off to finish her work.

Papeta sat at her piano and composed a song. Her voice rose clear and sweet, and filled the lofty apartment with melody. Neida hovered near, ready to put in a word, and finally alighted on the shoulder of the princess, where she could whisper in her ear.

“Your voice is perfectly exquisite!” she cried. “I was at court last night, and heard you sing. But I could not fully enjoy it, such a chattering and talking went on all the time.”

“I sang for those only who preferred not to talk,” replied Papeta.

“But how could people talk when such heavenly sounds filled the rooms? I looked at the Princess Novella with amazement. She had a troop of young noblemen about her, and kept them intent on every word that fell from her lips. Their ears were for her alone.”

“It must be delightful to have such a flow of speech as the Princess Novella,” replied Mosella. “And she writes with as much ease as she talks. I do not wonder people like to be in her company.”

“You speak like a loyal, true-hearted sister, as I am sure you are,” returned Neida. “But it is hard that such a voice as yours should not silence every other voice. Why, in the midst of one of your most touching tender songs, when every sound should have been hushed, I heard the Countess Montanelle whisper to her neighbor: ‘This singing and thrumming is all very well, but the Princess Moina is worth all her sisters put together. She actually makes with her own hands all the exquisite dresses they wear!’”

Mosella smiled.

“Poor Moina! Her mind is so empty that she finds her scissors and thimble quite a resource!” she said.

As she uttered these words she felt no little contempt for the Countess Montanelle.

While this conversation was going on Reima stood before her easel, her fine face all in a glow. A conception of wondrous beauty had come to her during the early hours of the night, when unusual excitement kept her awake.

She had made a hasty sketch, and now with eager joy had prepared her colors, and was ready for the details of her work. A bee, as she fancied, alighted on the canvas; and she was about to brush it off, when Neida, for she it was, cried out:

“Do not drive me away, beautiful princess! I have much to say to you before you begin your day’s work.”

“Another time will do as well,” said Reima. “Pray do not disturb me.”

“I saw your paintings as they were exhibited last night,” said Neida. “Among them are works of real genius. But genius is not worth much in this world. A pretty face, a winning address, a thrum or two of music, an agreeable voice—these attract the multitude, while such as you are passed by and overlooked.”

“One cannot expect to have genius and beauty, and all the gifts of nature,” returned Reima. “For my part, I am content with the share that has fallen to me. No tongue can tell the delight I take in my art.”

“That is all very well while the enthusiasm of youth sustains you,” replied Neida. “But, ere long, your heart will assert its rights. It will

cry out for lovè, and will not be pacified by admiration."

"Admiration!" cried Reima; "who talks of admiration?"

"Everybody talks of it. Your sister, the Princess Delicieuse, does more. She wins it."

"Let her have it, then," said Reima, a little pensively. "I for one can do without it."

"Can you do without love?"

"Nay, I cannot and do not," cried Reima. "My sisters all love me. And so does the queen, my mother."

Neida laughed. Her laugh was more horrible than words can tell.

"Paint away, then!" she cried; "and, while you are absorbed in your art, let the world pass you by and forget you. The merest daub from the Princess Delicieuse will be fought for, while you, a child of genius, must remain sufficient unto yourself."

So saying, Neida flew off. Reima remained silent and perplexed.

"I, too, crave the joy of winning love and favor, but it is denied me!" she thought. "Delicieuse wins both without an effort. Why should she possess so divine a gift, and I have merely the power to spread colors over canvas."

As she spoke she threw her brushes from her in disgust.

"What can have happened to my ink?" cried Novella. "It has all dried up, and I am in such haste to write. Ah, such beautiful images are floating in my brain! They will be gone forever if I do not seize them at once!"

"It is I who have dried up your ink, noble lady,"

said Neïda, coming forth and sitting down on the desk of the princess.

"And who are you?" asked Novella, looking with disgust at the hateful little figure.

"I am one who cannot bear the injustice of the world," replied Neïda. "When I listen to your words, so full of fire and passion; when I look over your shoulder and read what you write in those favored moments when you enchain and imprison the exquisite images that come to you as by an inspiration; when I do this, I say, I am lost in amazement and filled with shame. Half the world prefers to you a simple girl who has not a thought beyond her needle. The other half runs after a beautiful face or an agreeable voice. You may talk like an oracle, and write with a pen dipped in fire, yet only here and there will you find a worshiper."

"I do not write because I want worshipers," returned Novella, much amused. "I write because I cannot help it. I enjoy the thoughts that come to me as dreams come, I know not how or whence. I put forth my hand to catch them, as I would catch the birds that fly over my head."

"Yet I see you often retire to a hidden corner, there to sit in darkness and sadness. This does not look like enjoyment."

"I believe," replied Novella, "that a certain sadness ever follows, if it does not accompany, moments of inspiration. Perfect, unalloyed felicity I do not expect to find on earth."

"Your sister Papeta has no hours of despondency. She is as joyous as the birds like which she sings. The Princess Moina sits all day in calm content, the victim of no moods and tense like yours. The Princess Delicieuse, without a ray of

genius, is preferred before you by high and low, the learned as well as the unlearned."

Novella sighed.

"I should gladly be beloved, as she is!" she said. "I should like Moina's calm and placid nature; at least, there are times when I would gladly exchange my gifts for hers.

"I feel for you!" cried Neida. "Your happiness is a fitful thing, that comes and goes with the passing moment. You are on the mountain tops one day and down in the abyss the next."

"It is true!" cried Novella. "But I riot on the mountain tops when I am there!"

"I have still business on hand; I must go. Think of all I have said," returned Neida, fluttering off.

Novella threw herself back in a chair.

"What would I not give," she thought, "to be as beautiful, as charming, as Delicieuse. Everything she says delights everybody, yet she talks only little nothings. As for me, nobody understands me. My heart is as warm as hers, nay, warmer; it is a furnace in full glow; but because I do not carry it about in my hands, as she carries her, nobody believes in it. I am not happy! No, I am wretched!"

At this moment Delicieuse was putting one foot out of bed. She had made up, in a long morning nap, all the sleep she had lost the previous night, and looked as fresh and pretty as a rose just opened. Peace and good-will towards everybody, including herself, filled her heart. As she thrust her little foot in her slipper, she perceived some foreign substance there, and sprang back into bed, where she sat, half-frightened, half amused, the prettiest picture imaginable.

“I verily believe a mouse has taken up its abode in my slipper,” thought she.

As she spoke, Neida bounded out of her hiding-place and seated herself on the bed, face to face with the young princess.

“You are a beautiful creature!” she began. “More so at this moment, in your simple night-dress, with your hair floating over your shoulders, than you were last evening, when arrayed in robes of state.”

“I wish I could return the compliment,” said Delicieuse good-humoredly.

“I make no pretensions to beauty,” replied Neida, with a fearful roll of her great green eyes. “I am, therefore, the more dazzled by yours. But, my poor child, beauty is an evanescent charm. When old age and disease have destroyed yours, all your sisters will retain a power to please, which you will desire in vain. Even now you see what crowds cluster about the Princesses Mosella and Papeta, and what homage is paid by men of genius to the gifts of Reima and Novella. A certain class of admirers will always be yours, but the most cultivated minds will ever prefer the society of your sisters.”

Delicieuse replied by leaning over a little, and with her finger and thumb she sent Neida spinning through the air at a rate quite fitted to turn her brain, if she had any. Then, springing out of bed, the gay young princess rang a silver bell to summon her attendants to assist her in dressing. While this process was going on she tried, by chatting half to herself, half to them, to escape the unpleasant fancies Neida had awakened in her.

When at last she joined her sisters she was as-

tonished that not one of them came to meet and caress her as usual.

"Their heads were all turned last evening, I suppose," she said to herself. "Good-morning Moina ! What ! not at work ? It is not possible that my dress for to-night is already finished ?"

"I am not the family seamstress," replied Moina. "Why should I rise early to prepare your dresses, while you lie idling in bed ? Do you really imagine, because you happen to be prettier than I, that I am to spend my whole time in serving you ?"

Delicieuse made no answer, but her eyes filled with tears. Never before had such harsh language fallen upon her ears. She hurried away, hoping to find refuge with Reima.

"You see I am behind you all 'this morning,'" she said approaching her sister. "Are you at work on a new picture ? Have you finished my portrait ?"

"Your portrait ?" cried Reima scornfully ; "not I ! Why should I finish it, pray ? Are you not content with seeing everybody at your feet, but must you see yourself on canvas also ?"

"My dear, you must have eaten something that disagreed with you last night," said Delicieuse. "Otherwise I do not see what makes you so ill-humored."

"I am not ill-humored," said Reima. "I am only out of spirits. Do go away, child, and leave me in peace."

"I am going, you may depend," returned Delicieuse. "For my part, I am quite willing to leave you to yourself."

"Delicieuse is getting positively disagreeable !" thought Reima. "She thinks that because she is so handsome she can talk as she likes. And,

to be sure, so she can. Ah ! I wish I were as beautiful ! But all I am good for is to stand here and daub ! ”

Delicieuse passed on, ruffled and displeased. “ I suppose Reima takes airs upon herself because so much was said of her genius last evening,” thought she. “ It must be delightful to be a genius ! As to beauty, I must own that I am tired already of mine. What an amount of nonsense it makes people talk ! ”

At this moment she espied Mosella, who sat reading by herself, and Papeta, who picked a faded bouquet to pieces, at a little distance.

“ Have you inseparables quarreled also ? ” she cried.

“ What do you mean ? ” asked Mosella. “ Cannot one take up a book without being taken to task ? ”

“ And is picking a bouquet to pieces worse than lying in bed all the morning ? ” demanded Papeta.

“ Everybody seems out of humor,” said Delicieuse. “ I feel low-spirited myself. If I could sing and play as you two can I would soon cheer myself up. Come, do play a little, Mosella ! And you, Papeta, pray sing, till you charm us all into good spirits again.”

“ There’s no use in playing. Nobody will listen,” replied Mosella.

“ Nor in singing, for it sets everybody to talking,” said Papeta. “ Ah, Delicieuse ! you lucky creature ! Why should you have all the beauty of the family ? ”

“ And why should the rest of you have all the talent ? ” asked Delicieuse, half crying. “ But where is Novella ? ”

“ Novella,” replied Papeta, “ is meditating suicide.

She has lowered like a thunder-cloud all the morning. I saw her with my own eyes tear up all her papers and throw them away."

"All her amusing tales and lovely poems?" cried Delicieuse. "Oh, if I could but write as she does! But I can do nothing. I cannot cut in the magical way Moina does, nor paint like Reima, nor sing and play like you two gifted creatures. All I am fit for is to be dressed like a doll, and to hear people say silly things about my face and my figure."

So saying, Delicieuse, hitherto the gayest, gladdest of mortals, began to cry in good earnest.

In the midst of this scene the queen, who also had slept late, came to rejoice in the sight of her darling children, and was shocked to find the state they were in. In vain she coaxed, scolded, and at last shed tears. Not one would confess the cause of her melancholy.

In her despair the queen sent for the Countess Reynosa, who soon made her appearance with her usual nonchalant air.

"You dear creatures!" she cried, on seeing the six woeful faces, "each of you shall confess to me in turn, and I will promise to put you out of misery before this day closes. Come, Moina, I will begin with you."

She drew the reluctant princess away to the queen's private cabinet, and caressed and condoled with her, until at last she learned all about the visit of Neida.

"Has that little monster really made you a visit?" she exclaimed. "You should know her, then, by her real name, and never again permit her so much as to whisper a word in your ear. Her name is ENVY."

Moina shuddered.

“She has made me very unhappy,” said she, “and made me lose all pleasure in the only gift I really possess. And, indeed, why should I, a princess royal, sit always at work like a common seamstress ?”

“Like an uncommon seamstress, you mean,” replied the countess. “Indeed, I know of no reason save this: People who have gifts always exercise them, as babies do their arms and legs. They find pleasure in this exercise themselves, and give pleasure to others besides.”

“But my sisters are all admired so much more than I !”

“Yes, they, too, have their gifts. Why not? Why should nature give you a talent and withhold her gifts from them ?”

“But my talent is so small when compared with theirs !”

“Then, because it is small, you fancy it best to let it lie idle. Then how will you employ yourself ?”

“I do not know,” said Moina despondently. “I cannot draw, I have no ear for music; I am not fond of reading, and, if I were, could not read all the time. But when I get an idea of a new dress in my head the scissors seem to move of their own accord, and I am quite happy, as I sit at my work, both at my success and at the pleasure I can give others. My sisters cannot bear to wear anything that is not of my workmanship.”

“Then, my dear Moina, go back to your own little corner. Exercise your gift, humble though it be. The time may come when you will see that nature has dealt as kindly with you as with your sisters.”

In like manner the countess encouraged and set right each of the princesses.

Moina caught up the robe she was preparing for Delicieuse, and took pleasure in completing it. Mosella and Papeta returned to their music with fresh ardor; while Reima drew forth the half-finished portrait of Delicieuse, which she had begun as a work of love, and put to it some finishing touches.

Novella seized her pen as a lost mariner seizes the compass he has thought gone overboard in the storm. All her papers had indeed perished in the tempest, but her brain was full of images of grace and beauty, and her imagination did not care a whit that its sails had been taken in during stress of weather.

The countess went from one to another, admiring their work, and putting in the right word here and there.

“This family circle is nearly perfect!” she cried at last. “We have not here a race of work-women, nor half a dozen musicians, nor a set of artists, nor a row of authors, nor six good-for-nothings like Delicieuse. We have a little of every sort, and if I can catch and kill the hideous creature who disturbed your peace, I see nothing to prevent your complete felicity.”

“I believe she is already dead,” said Delicieuse. “Here she lies, shriveled and shrunken, and does not move a limb.”

“Give me the corpse, then,” said the countess, laughing. “She shall have a state funeral.”

IV.

STRENGTH IN UNION.

FROM this time the princesses led a happy and harmonious life together, and the queen, when weary with the burden of royalty, found among them, with all their refreshing variety of character, a solace and a joy that made her life a continual feast. One morning, however, the king, when he set forth to hunt, entreated the queen to accompany him, to witness some rare sport.

“I am ashamed to refuse you,” she said, “but my heart misgives me. I have a presentiment that some misfortune will befall our children.”

“One should put no confidence in presentiments,” replied the king. “For my part I have a foreboding of evil as awaiting myself! I own it is weak to yield to it, yet it makes me shrink from going forth to the hunt without you.”

These words decided the queen, yet she took leave of her daughters with a tenderness that bordered on sadness. The princesses, on their part, responded with unusual warmth to her caresses; never had she seemed to them so dear. They employed themselves in her absence with little devices for her pleasure. Moina began a bit of choice embroidery; Reima designed a picture for her private cabinet; Mosella and Papeta

composed music for a song of welcome, written by Novella, as her welcome home; Delicieuse ran to the window every five minutes to see if she were coming. But night fell, and the gay cavalcade was neither seen nor heard.

The princesses assured each other that the delay betokened no evil. To beguile themselves of the time they worked with more industry. At bedtime there was still no news of the absent party.

“What can it mean?” they whispered to each other, while Delicieuse cried herself to sleep.

At midnight wheels were heard, and the Countess Reynosa appeared, pale and tearful.

“My children!” she cried, and could say no more.

They clustered about her, and clung to her, without daring to ask a question. She gathered them in her arms, spoke a few incoherent words, and then, pushing them away, began pacing the room like one beside herself.

Then came confused sounds from without.

“They are bringing them home!” she said in a whisper.

One cannot dwell on such scenes. The king and the queen had been thrown from their chariot. Both were dead.

The days of public mourning and ceremony were over. Their private grief the young princesses concealed in the retirement of their own apartments. They did not ask themselves, for their lives had been simple and unworldly, who should reign over the desolate kingdom. But others, less simple, more worldly, did ask the question, and presently dissension and clamor arose and filled the land. Some of the people looked upon Novella as heiress to the throne. It was she whom the king

and queen had first adopted as their child; she excelled her sisters in learning if not in talent; if the blood in her veins was not royal her education was. Others contended that Delicieuse, as the favorite of the queen and the people, was best fitted to ascend the throne. A third party clung to the aristocracy of birth, and clamored for the rights of the young nephew of the king.

The Countess Reynosa weighed these conflicting opinions, and her clear judgment assured her that the third party had justice on its side and would finally prevail. But what was to become of the six princesses? Had any provision been made for them? Alas! none. The king and the queen, like other mistaken souls, had expected to live forever. It turned out that they were not princesses after all; merely six nobodies. The worst of it was that not one of them seriously lamented this circumstance. Moina fancied she could enjoy her scissors, her thimble, her needle quite as much when stripped of her title as she had done with it. Reima went on painting a portrait of the queen from memory, and found consolation in the task. Mosella and Papeta set to music many plaintive little songs, composed by Novella after the first days of speechless agony were over, and their plebeian hands and voices made as sweet melody as ever. Novella began a long poem, wherein she tried to prove that life is a dream; only, being a genius, she did it in an original way. Delicieuse looked charming in her simple black dress, and softened and sanctified by suffering, was more attractive, more lovely than ever.

“My dear children,” said the Countess Reynosa, “I foresaw this day and made provision for it. In the first place, I avoided introducing boys into the

palace, for what might prove only temporary grandeur. Less flexible, more ambitious than girls, reverses would have been a far greater shock to them than to you. In the second place, I selected each of you with a reasonable prospect that you would inherit the gifts and graces of the parents who gave you birth. In this I hope I have not been disappointed. Last of all, I ever urged the queen to educate you, as far as possible, to find happiness in each other, and in the exercise of the gifts with which you were endowed by nature. You are, therefore, almost entirely independent of this people, by whom the designs of the king and queen for you are set at naught."

"All I want," said Novella, "is some little corner where I can read and write, and have no trouble about dress, or talk about etiquette."

"As for me, I shall travel in foreign lands," said Reima, "study the old masters, and perfect myself in my art. Royalty under such circumstances would only be a burden. I shall then settle down somewhere and spend my life in painting."

"And we shall devote ourselves to music," said Mosella and Papeta, "and forget the court and all its tiresome observances."

"Meanwhile I will see that you are all clothed neatly," said Moina.

"That is the first sensible speech I have heard yet," said the countess. "Pray, my dear Novella, while you sit reading and writing who is to shelter and who to feed you? And you, Reima, how will you travel? On foot?"

The twain looked a little foolish, but not half so anxious as penniless maidens ought to have looked.

"Well, well, you are not quite destitute," continued the countess. "You have the gifts pre-

sented you at your christening and other personal property. You can, with their help, secure a home, where you can all live together, or you can separate, and each face the world for herself."

"Oh, let us all keep together," said Delicieuse, "and live exactly as we have done."

"And have you a palace for this purpose, my child?"

It was now the turn of Delicieuse to look foolish.

"You shall live with me, darling," said Reima, "and so shall Moina. All the others can take care of themselves, or join us, as they like."

"But we shall want Moina and Delicieuse to live with us," cried the two musicians.

"That would leave me quite alone," said Novella, "and that I could not think of. I do not know how to manage a needle nor what to wear. And in my hours of weariness and sadness no one can cheer and arouse me like Delicieuse."

Thus there was the same strife for the possession of the useless as of the useful sister.

"I see how it is," said Reynosa. "You must live together. Each feels herself incomplete without the others. Novella needs somebody to take care of her and somebody to love. In return she will give love and endless entertainment. Reima, too, needs looking after, and someone who will watch with a friendly eye the growth of her paintings. Our two musicians must not become one-sided by thinking only of melody and of song. They must enjoy being clothed by Moina's kind hands, listening to Novella's poems, and discussing Reima's works. And you must all train your ears to appreciate the talents of these two marvelous creatures who sing and play with such rare, such exquisite harmony."

“And what shall I do?” cried Delicieuse.

“You shall do a little of everything, dear child. You shall help Moina to guide the house and Reima to mix the colors. You shall take care that the piano is never out of tune, or Novella at a loss for pens and paper. In a word, you shall be what you have always been, always ready with the oil of gladness, wherever you see friction, the sweetest, the most lovable creature in the world.”

Delicieuse smiled, and ran to embrace all her sisters, hardly knowing which she loved best.

It was not long before these royal maidens, royal only in their virtues and their talents, found themselves in a home in a vine-clad land, where each could live as nature had designed she should live.

Moina, whose practical skill was not confined to her needle, kept the house with such exquisite care and neatness that her sisters preferred it to a palace. She found happiness in forgetting herself, in her pride in them, and in the freedom from petty cares from which she shielded them. Her calm, serene character was a continual repose to the varying moods of Reima and Novella; a balance-wheel to works that, running fast, often ran irregularly. Reima studied the old masters with no need for further travel, for her home lay among their works.

Mosella and Papeta composed music, made Delicieuse listen to and admire it when other hearers were wanting, and were satisfied with her criticisms.

Novella wrote books, and had her frenzies. She had her gentle and her gay moods, also, and made laughter ring through the house at her will. Not one of these four was conscious of her powers or asked for fame. Nor did their aristocratic breeding make them ashamed to work for their bread.

They even fancied that bread thus won needed less butter to help it down than that of charity.

As to Delicieuse, she was the bright, the golden link that bound the household together in peace and harmony. Her smiles, her caresses, the love that flowed forth from her as from a living fountain, made their home glad with perpetual sunshine. Thank God for the gifts of genius He has scattered abroad with a bountiful hand ; but thank Him also that, without such gifts, one may become a joy and a benediction !

LITTLE ELLA AND THE FIRE-KING.

ONCE upon a time there was a little girl named Ella. She was an only child, and lived with her widowed mother, who, having no one else to love in all the world, lavished the fondest affection on her darling; and, to tell the truth, spoiled her sadly.

Ella was very beautiful; she had large dark eyes, and golden curls that hung gracefully over her white dimpled shoulders, and her cheeks and lips were like rosebuds to look at; but she had been so often told of her beauty, that I am sorry to say she had become extremely vain, and liked nothing so much as to be well dressed, and to hear people exclaim, as she walked along the streets, "What a lovely little lady!" Vanity was not Ella's only fault; she was also far from industrious, and she would let her mother wear her eyes out in making the fine clothes she was always asking for, while she sat idly on her stool in the warm chimney corner, and looked into the bright fire, till she fancied she could see hills and valleys, trees and houses, and even little men and women, in the glowing embers.

One winter's afternoon when the snow was on the ground, Ella's mother said to her: "It will soon be Christmas time, and I wish my darling to choose what she would like best for a New Year's gift." "Oh," cried the little girl, "I want a new hat, with cherry-colored ribbons, and a blue velvet

pelisse, trimmed with ermine." "Nay," said her mother, "I will buy you one of these things, my child, but I cannot afford to give you both; for you know, dear Ella, I am far from rich." "Never mind," said Ella impatiently; "a new hat and a new pelisse I *must* and *will* have, and I am sure that I shall neither eat, sleep, nor play for thinking of them; so do go out this very afternoon, there's a dear, kind mother, and buy them for me. See, it has almost left off snowing, and I will keep a good fire to warm you when you come home, and make some of the nice tea and toast of which you are so fond." And the little puss began to coax her mother, throwing her white arms around her neck and kissing her, till she could no longer resist her winning ways. So, fondly patting her daughter's rosy cheek, she put on her bonnet and cloak, and trudged out into the winter cold to get the finery which Ella wished for.

Now Ella had not a bad heart; she really loved her mother dearly, but much indulgence had made her thoughtless and selfish. She looked out of the window and nodded a smiling good-by to her kind parent, and then ran shivering back to the warm chimney corner. "Ah! how cold and dreary it looks outside," said she; "for my part, I shall amuse myself with looking at this nice, clear fire till mamma comes back;" and quite forgetting the tea and toast she had promised to get ready, she drew her stool to the hearth and sat looking at the flames which leaped and sparkled so merrily, and into the very depths of the glowing fire, where the trees, the gardens, and the palaces seemed more wonderful and beautiful than ever to her earnest gaze. The hail pattered against the window panes, and the wind whistled drearily outside, but the fire

trees had not lost their foliage, and all appeared summer in that cheerful spot. "I wish, I wish," sighed the wayward Ella, "that I could always live in the fire, it is so cold and miserable here; and I should like of all things to wander in that lovely garden which I see yonder, and to dwell in that fine palace with the tiny door of glittering gold which stands in the midst of it."

Scarcely had the words passed her lips when the golden door of the palace flew open, and, breathless with astonishment, Ella beheld a noble train of lords and ladies no higher than her little finger, who, bowing to her as they passed from the palace gate, formed a brilliant line on each side of the avenue which led to this enchanted castle. Next came a troop of young maidens, bearing on their heads small baskets of filigree coal containing black diamonds of rare value. Then followed grooms in waiting, equerries, and attendants of every description in gorgeous liveries, and these were succeeded by twelve of the most exquisite pages that can be imagined, who advanced, bowing low and waving their plumed and jeweled caps to the ground. Lastly, a flourish of drums and trumpets announced the approach of royalty, and what was Ella's joy and surprise when there rode forth from the palace gates a superb young prince, far handsomer than any she had ever thought or dreamed of, mounted on a prancing fiery steed, which he managed with wonderful grace and skill. When he had reached the center of the avenue he dismounted, and, throwing the reins of his charger to an attendant, walked gracefully forward to the front of the grate and gazed at the blushing Ella—majesty and love speaking in every glance. The Fire-King was magnificently dressed in royal robes of blue flame bordered

with golden sparks, and wore on his head a crown of brilliants. His appearance was altogether most dazzling; for though his face might be considered a trifle too red, yet this was forgotten in the brightness of his eyes.

“Fairest of mortals,” said he as he knelt before Ella, “I am the King of the Salamanders, and I have come to woo you for my queen. Often have I watched you in the evening time as you looked into my dominions with longing eyes, sighing to live forever there. And who could gaze upon your beauty and not love you? Yes, Ella, the wish of your heart is granted. I offer you my hand and royal crown. Come, be my bride this day, and dwell with me forever in my kingdom of flame.” Now, Ella was not in the least frightened by the king’s address, for she had heard his voice many times before, but had then mistaken it for the popping of the coals, to which, it must be owned, it bore no small resemblance; but though her heart leaped with delight at the thought of being married to the handsome king, and wearing a diamond crown, yet she almost feared that she might be burned if she ventured into the fire, and even if she escaped that danger, her size was another obstacle to her wishes; for she saw plainly enough that it would be quite impossible for her even so much as to enter the kingdom, much more to dwell in a palace a hundred times smaller than herself. Ready to cry with vexation and disappointment, she was about to refuse the offer of the Salamander, when she felt herself to be growing smaller every instant, and soon she became even more diminutive than the king himself, while the heat of the fire, which before had sadly scorched her face, now seemed to her no greater than the pleasant warmth of a summer’s day.

Yet, as she stood on the topmost bar of the grate, and lifted her dainty little foot, clad in the tiniest and most exquisite of red slippers, to spring into fireland, she paused once more; for the recollection of her doting mother, who had ventured out on this dreary day, regardless of wind and storm, merely to gratify a selfish whim of hers, shot a pang of remorse through her heart, and a tear gathered in her eye and fell on the prince's head as he stood below awaiting her with impatience. It must be confessed he looked rather black at this, for water did not at all agree with his constitution; and Ella's tear, though a very small one, threatened to put him out for the day. "Do not weep, my love," said he in a hissing voice, which he tried to render as agreeable as possible; "I assure you that your mother will not miss you so much as you imagine. She is going to marry a new husband, and then she will have other children and love them better than you. Besides which, she shall not think you ungrateful, for I will take care to scatter some ashes on the hearth rug, which will cause her to think that you have ventured too near the fire, and so have been burned to death." Now, though Ella could not in her heart believe all this, or think that her poor mother would ever again love any other creature in the world, yet vanity and curiosity had got possession of her foolish little head, and hesitating no longer, she sprang into the open arms of her fiery lover, who clasped her in a warm embrace, and showered kisses on her ruby lips.

The lords and ladies now approached, and kneeling at Ella's feet, saluted her as their queen; and next the young maidens advanced with their basket of jewels, the king's wedding gift to his fair young bride. Twelve of the noblest ladies of the court,

who were appointed to be maids of honor, respectfully begged Ella to tell them how they might serve her majesty. "Attend your royal mistress to her robing room," said the king, and then we must to horse, for we have far to travel this night before we can reach our palace in the bowels of the earth. You must know, my sweet queen," continued he, "that this fireplace of your mother's is only one of my many country houses, and my state residence is far more vast and magnificent; thither shall we go this night, that our wedding-feast may be all the grander. The banquet waits our coming, so haste, I pray you, love, and don your wedding dress." "Can we not stay in this palace to-night?" said Ella, who did not altogether relish going so far from her old home. "No, no, silly one," said the king. "Pray, is not the fire raked out every night? and then what would become of us? A pretty mess you would make of our wedding-feast. But do not look so sad, dear love; you shall often return to this place if it pleases you; for it is only at night that we are forced to leave it for our palace in the earth." Ella brightened up at this, and gayly entered the palace she had so much longed to live in. Her maids of honor followed, and conducted her to her apartments, where they decked her as became a royal bride in rich robes of white flame. A circlet of sparks surrounded her golden curls, and over her head she wore a long veil of exquisitely transparent smoke. Thus attired, she looked more beautiful than the morning star, and could scarcely tear herself away from the mirror which reflected her charms, though the king was impatiently calling for her, and her horse stood saddled at the castle gate. At last she was ready, and, joining the impatient bridegroom, mounted her steed, and the whole train

departed with royal pomp—Ella and the king at the head, drums beating and trumpets sounding.

“Are you happy and content, my Ella?” said the handsome king, fixing his piercing eyes tenderly on her blushing face as they rode away. “That indeed I am, sweet prince,” returned Ella; but she was not really so; her heart felt heavy amid all this splendor. She tried to think it was only the fear of spoiling her complexion which troubled her; but conscience whispered that an ungrateful child could never hope to be happy again. After riding a long way they arrived at the king’s palace in the depths of the earth. The magnificence of this subterranean dwelling quite overpowered the youthful queen with awe, as she began to realize the splendid extent of her new dominions, and she ceased to wonder at the dreadful earthquakes of which she had sometimes read, when she saw the flames that raged in the earth’s center beneath the fields, the rocks, and the houses, which appeared so safe to mortal eyes. While these thoughts were passing through her mind, an attendant bounced out suddenly before the king and said: “Supper is served, your gracious majesty.” “And you too shall be served for your insolence, sirrah,” said his gracious majesty; who, without more ado, put an untimely end to the forward young spark with a single blow. Ella was not a little frightened by this very unpleasant interruption to the wedding gayeties, but the courtiers took no notice whatever of their companion’s fate, and did not seem in the least astonished; for to let you into a secret, if everything was hot in fireland, the king’s temper was about the hottest thing of all. The banquet was served in right royal style with every dainty that could tempt a Salamander’s palate. But Ella was not quite a

Salamander yet, and she certainly did not find the dishes of which the king pressed her to eat half so delicious as the plum pudding and mince pies she used to have at home. The king noticed that she did not eat with a good appetite, and as nothing could be too hot to please him, he took it into his head that Ella did not relish her supper because it was cold, and he flew into a terrible passion in consequence; and though Ella, trembling from head to foot at his grim looks, begged him not to disturb himself on her account, and tried her utmost to swallow the scalding food as if she liked it, a dozen or so of courtiers were blown out before the dreadful supper came to an end. But after this followed fireworks and diversions in honor of the wedding, and Ella was so delighted with the wonderful sight that the king almost forgot his ill-temper when he saw her sweet face dimpled with such rosy smiles, and the night was far spent in these amusements, when Ella was conducted by her maids of honor to her splendid sleeping room in the glittering palace; so that she laid her head on her crimson and gold pillow, feeling that after all it was a very grand thing to be a queen and a bride, even though her lover might not be quite such a charming prince as he had appeared at first.

In the morning the king told Ella that he had not forgotten his promise of allowing her to spend part of her honeymoon in her mother's fireplace, and she gladly accepted his offer of going thither at once. The horses therefore were brought out, and away they rode, to the sound of trumpet and horn, along the road of flint, and through the iron gates which opened into the grate, till at last they drew rein before the shining gold gates of the Salamander's palace, which was gayly decked with ban-

ners and wreaths of flame to welcome the coming of the royal bride.

Now the king, who was a very vain prince, was in a great hurry to lead Ella into the palace so that he might show her all his treasures, and make her feel what a grand king she had married, but she, having her own reasons for being left by herself for a while, tried all sorts of excuses to remain behind. "It is very pleasant out here," said she, "and I should like to sit and watch the smoke curling up the chimney, so that I may know which way the wind blows." "The wind is nothing to you or me," returned the king, "and it is not proper for my bride to remain by herself, so I will not allow it." "But I will stay by myself as long as I choose, too," said the queen, her eyes beginning to sparkle, for she was not accustomed to contradiction; "do you imagine I am always going to have either you or a parcel of black, sooty maids of honor forever at my heels?" "No more sooty than you are yourself," said the king in a pet. Saying this, he sent a large coal flying in the queen's face, which fairly knocked her down; and she who had never received so much as a harsh word in her life, lay upon the ground sobbing with grief and passion. The king, however, was only a young husband and a lover still; therefore when he saw how much his fair young wife took his unkindness to heart, he felt ashamed of his violence, and, raising her tenderly from the ground, begged her pardon humbly enough, and asked what he could do to make her amends. "Leave me by myself," was all that Ella would answer, and deeming it better to feign obedience, the king at last entered the palace with his train of nobles; but he made up his mind to watch well

from some sly corner all that went on outside, for he felt quite certain that mischief was brewing.

As soon as Ella found herself alone she ran as fast as she could to the front of the grate, and gazed with a beating heart into the dear old room which had once been her home; but what was her grief and horror at the sight which there met her eyes! A heap of ashes was on the hearth rug, amid which Ella could see scorched and blackened fragments of the dress she had worn the night before, and near it lay her mother, cold, pale, and senseless. Her soft brown hair had in a single night changed to silvery gray, her eyes were closed, and it was only by a faint shudder which now and then passed over her frame that Ella could tell she was yet alive. An old servant, who had once been Ella's nurse, knelt near her mistress, and chafed her cold hands while tears streamed down her cheeks, and on the ground near them lay the beautiful hat with cherry-colored ribbons, and the blue velvet pelisse, which had been the poor woman's last errand of love for her cruel little daughter.

Full of grief and repentance at this sad sight Ella tried with all her might to jump into the room and run to her dear mamma's assistance; but the king, who, as I told you, was watching her from the castle with all his eyes, sprang quickly forward and caught her in his arms. "Your folly had nearly cost you your life," said he angrily. "Remember, ungrateful Ella, that you are now a Salamander and my queen, and that you can no longer exist out of the fire." With many a sigh Ella was forced to hide her misery from her husband, whom she now began to fear even more than she had before admired; and as he was unwilling to trust her any longer so near her old home, he ordered the horses

to be got ready with all dispatch, and rode with her at once to his palace in the earth's center. That beautiful palace seemed to Ella nothing better than a prison, now that she could never hope to see her dear mamma again; and indeed from that time forward there was no more happiness for the conscience-stricken Fire-Queen. No one could live in so hot a country without having a proportionably warm temper; and the king began to get weary of Ella and her fretfulness, especially as her beauty changed visibly and daily. Her pretty rosy face grew quite scorched and heated-looking, and her once glossy and golden curls became rough and frizzled in this trying climate. After a time the king used to pretend that he had a great many state matters to regulate in a large mountain called Vesuvius, where he had a fine palace, and was always going off on long journeys by himself to Italy, where this mountain stood. Ella did not believe a word of his excuses, and their quarrels grew to be the scandal of the court and the talk of all the Salamanders. Whenever the king proposed going to Vesuvius the courtiers were fain to hide themselves, for neither king nor queen were very particular who came in for a share of their blows when they had one of their angry quarrels with each other. Now, the truth of the matter was, as Ella imagined, that the king was as much in love with a beautiful Italian princess as he had once been with herself. He would not have continued to care for her even if she had smiled as sweetly, and tried to please him as much as ever; but her wicked passions made him hate her, so that he longed to be rid of her, and contradicted her in everything she wished for.

You may be sure that Ella desired more and more to revisit her home and her mother, but for a long

time she sought in vain for an opportunity : the king having given strict orders that when he was away she should on no account be allowed to leave the palace. On one occasion, however, he was absent for so many weeks that all the Salamanders began to hope he was dead. Now Ella had been so fortunate as to find the large golden key which opened his treasure chests, and which he had forgotten to take with him on his last journey. She begged therefore very hard to be allowed to leave the palace, and told the courtiers that they might take as much treasure as they chose, if they would only permit her to escape. When they saw the shining heaps of gold and silver they thought of nothing but filling their pockets and quarreling for the largest share. So Ella ran off unperceived, and saddling her horse with her own hands, leaped joyfully on his back, and rode as fast as she could gallop till she once more found herself in the fireplace of her mother's house.

When she peeped into the well-known room from between the bars she beheld her mother, old, worn, and gray, sitting mournfully by the fireside, while many a tear ran down her furrowed cheeks. Ella could see her look sorrowfully at her own little empty stool which stood in its old warm corner by the chimney nook, and she could not doubt that her poor mamma was reproaching herself with carelessness in leaving her alone on that sad day, when, she imagined, her little Ella had been burned to death. In vain did the repentant queen call to her mamma, and try everything she could think of to make herself heard. Her voice was now the voice of a Salamander, which, as I told you before, can scarcely be distinguished by mortal ears from the crackling flames of a cheerful fire, so that the poor

mother could not be comforted by the consoling words which her unhappy daughter strove in vain to render intelligible. Evening was drawing on, and Ella, almost exhausted by grief, had sat down to rest herself and bemoan her hard fate in a hollow coal by the roadside, when she was startled by a rushing sound beneath her, which convinced her that the Fire-King must have unexpectedly returned, and was now coming on his swiftest horse, which traveled faster than the wind, to punish his runaway queen. In another minute the iron gates at the back of the grate were thrown open with a loud crash, and the Fire-King galloped furiously up to Ella, perfectly black with the fierce passion which consumed him, and closely followed by his trembling courtiers.

“Insolent creature,” cried the enraged monarch, “beware how you tempt my wrath! What audacity to steal my treasures and corrupt my courtiers in so scandalous a manner. But I might have known the manner in which you would behave, when I chose for my queen a little low-born mortal, whose silly mother had taught her nothing better than to be idle and disobedient.” “How dare you abuse my dear mamma?” returned Ella, forgetting her terror—when she heard her mother thus rudely blamed; and as she was a match for the king when her spirit was up, a pitched battle began between the royal pair, which threatened to be serious. This way and that way flew the live coals, the courtiers scuttled off into all the holes and corners they could think of to be out of harm’s way, and there was soon a clear stage and no favor for the angry couple.

In the midst of the fray the fury of the combatants was arrested by a bright blaze which sprang up in the room where Ella’s mother was sitting, for

the red-hot coals, which were pelted about by the king and queen so plentifully, had in fact set fire to the house, and thus Ella was doomed to be the cause of nothing but misfortune to her unhappy parent. She stood transfixed with horror at the sight of the spreading flames, but the Fire-King shouted with delight.

“ Hurrah ! ” cried he, springing out into the blaze, “ this is a sight worth all my treasures.” Ella could distinguish the shrieks of her dear mamma ringing high above the roaring of the flames, the crackling of the wood, and the fiendish laughter of the Fire-King, and her senses failing her, she fell into a deep swoon.

When consciousness returned she found herself bound hand and foot in a miserable dungeon, securely guarded by two wicked little Salamander goblins, named Grizzle and Frizzle, who had charge of the state prisoners. She was allowed no better food than brimstone, but she cared little for this hardship; and could she only have known her mother to be safe and happy she would have felt contented, but the little imps, her jailers, laughed so maliciously when she entreated them to satisfy her on this point, that she feared the worst.

Many wretched days passed in this manner, but one night when poor Ella was lying sleepless on her hard bed, her attention was roused by the cackling laughter of Grizzle and Frizzle, who seemed to be mightily enjoying some joke as they cowered together in a corner over a blue flame. “ Comrade,” said Grizzle, “ the king will certainly bring home his new bride to-morrow; we had best make short work of Queen Ella to-night, or our ears will be well pulled for us.” “ What you say is true,” replied Frizzle, “ and indeed it is all owing to your laziness

that we did not kill her long ago. The king is coming with his bride to-morrow, that is very certain; therefore let business be business, and we will make an end of her before supper."

Though the hapless Ella could hear every word of this, all power to move or scream seemed denied her; her limbs felt stiff and heavy, and her parched tongue refused to utter a sound; the little goblins were at last so close to her that she could feel their breath upon her cheek, and knew that their hideous leering eyes were gloating over her; still she lay speechless and motionless. Suddenly a loud knock was heard at the door, and Ella felt her bonds and her tongue loosened at the sound. Springing to her feet, she uttered a piercing scream. "Save me, save me!" she cried.

"Save you!" said her mother, entering the room. "Why, Ella, have you been asleep and dreaming, you idle puss? What a tremble you are in, to be sure!" "Oh, mamma, mamma," cried the delighted child, as she clung round her mother's dear neck and smothered her with kisses, "is it really only a dream? Yes, yes! your hair is not gray, the house is not burned. Then the Fire-King may marry the Italian princess with all my heart, for I will never, never, leave you again." "You are talking sad nonsense, you little goose, with your Italian princesses," said her mother, laughing heartily; "but come, I have bought you your hat and pelisse; we will try them on and see what a beauty you will look." "Nay," said the little maiden sadly, "I do not care for finery now, mamma, and, indeed, I am not a beauty, but only a vain, silly child, who does not deserve to have so kind a mother. Come, dear mamma, rest yourself in your easy-chair, take off your wet shoes, and let me wait

upon you." Then Ella bustled about, stirred the fire, drew the window curtains, and made her mother some hot tea and toast. As they sat by their cheerful hearth that evening Ella related all her wonderful adventures in fireland, and she and her mother could not but agree that it is doubtless much more pleasant to look at the fire than to live in it.

Ever since that time, I am happy to tell you, Ella has become quite a changed character. She now works busily for her mother, and is her greatest comfort; and though she is always pretty and neat, she no longer makes fine clothes her only study. Doubtless some kind fairy must have sent her this wonderful dream to cure her of her faults, and to make her henceforth as lovely in mind as she had ever been in person.

THE WONDERFUL APPLE TREE.

A SICK man, being at the point of death, summoned his children, three sons and an only daughter, to his bedside, and addressed them as follows :

“ My dear children, I fear my hours are numbered, and that I shall be forced to leave you alone in the wide world to shift for yourselves ; but be kind and affectionate to one another, and comply with my last request, and you will do well. I have nothing to leave you but the small plot of ground on which stands the young apple tree I planted last summer, for things have, alas ! gone badly with me since I became too feeble to work. When I am dead, I charge you, my sons, to take out my heart and brain and bury them beneath the apple tree ; and, above all things, do not fail to dig and manure the roots four times a year ; and it must be your portion of labor, my dear little daughter, to attend to the watering of the tree, which will well repay you for your care.”

The kind father then closed his eyes and died, to the great affliction of his poor children, who thus found themselves alone in the world, almost unprovided for.

After sorrowing for a while, they bethought themselves of their dying father's commands ; so the three sons took out his heart and brain and buried them beneath the tree, the roots of which they dug and manured as they had been directed. As for the little maiden, she grieved for her father so much that the spot was continually kept watered by

her warm tears alone, and the tree grew and flourished so rapidly that in the short space of three months the trunk became as large as a small tower, and such a crop of apples was produced as was never known before. Each apple weighed more than a pound, and proved to be of so rare and delicious a flavor that a large sum of money was easily raised by the sale of them. Three months afterward, to the astonishment of everybody, a second crop appeared, even finer and more beautiful than the first. In short, this wonderful tree never failed to bring forth four crops of magnificent apples every year, and the three brothers with their sister lived together in comfort and plenty.

Things went on thus for some time, but after a while the brothers said to each other: "The tree is now so strong and flourishing that it can no longer need the attention we have hitherto bestowed on it; let us, therefore, cease to dig and manure the roots, which is rough work and quite unfit for gentlemen."

The little sister begged them over and over again to cherish the tree as before, but they paid no heed to her advice, and spent all their time in feasting and diverting themselves. But, though thus abandoned to chance by her brothers, the maiden was still constant to her beloved charge, and the tree was watered night and morning by her tears, which continued to flow as warmly as ever over the spot where her dear father's remains lay buried.

Three months had passed in this manner, when one day on visiting the tree as usual, the maiden perceived that the ground, beneath which reposed the heart and brain of her father, had been disturbed; and on summoning her brothers to the spot, they were dismayed at discovering that these

precious relics had entirely disappeared. Then the little sister wept and wrung her hands. "Alas!" cried she, "some misfortune will surely befall us, now that the tree is deprived of its chief nourishment."

Her brothers chid her for her folly, although they had their own misgivings. "You are a silly girl," said they, "to grieve at what cannot be helped; see, the tree is loaded with apples, which we will gather to-morrow, and all will be as before."

The next day, however, when they repaired to the garden with baskets and ladders for this purpose, instead of a flourishing and beautiful apple tree loaded with tempting fruit, they found a scorched and blackened trunk, furnished with only a few withered and leafless branches.

Then they all began crying and lamenting, and for a while could not be comforted, but at last the little maiden dried her tears and endeavored to console her brothers. "Sorrow will not feed us," said she; "therefore we must set out into the world and work for our living; but let us first divide the money we have left into equal shares, and do you, brothers, take a hatchet, and cut the trunk of the tree into logs, which will, at any rate, serve to warm us through the winter."

The brothers commended her wisdom, and each seizing a hatchet, they dealt several sturdy blows at the trunk, so that at last a small cleft was made near the roots, when, to their great surprise, they found the tree to be entirely hollow, and, peeping through the opening they had made, perceived a small winding staircase in the interior. They now redoubled their blows, and soon succeeded in cutting away a space sufficiently large to admit of their entering the tree with a little squeezing.

They lost no time in ascending the staircase, but before they had mounted many steps they found themselves in a recess, in which was stored away all the sap which would have nourished the tree, had it lived to its full time. This sap was a syrup of so excellent and cordial a nature that it exceeded the choicest wine in flavor, and after tasting it the eldest brother declared he would go no higher, exclaiming he desired nothing more than to carry off such a prize. Accordingly he commenced taking off his shoes, his stockings, and even his shirt, which he sewed up and filled full of the sap. His brothers and sisters, after vainly endeavoring to persuade him to accompany them and seek for something better, were at last compelled to leave him behind and to continue the ascent without him. They were getting a little weary, when they arrived at a second recess, in which were stored away all the leaves that would have sprouted from the tree had it lived to its full time. These leaves were of shining silver, and the second brother had no sooner cast his eyes on them than he began to fill his pockets as fast as he could with the glittering treasure, and no longer thought of seeking for any richer prize. The two others therefore left him busily collecting all the leaves into heaps to carry away with him, and continued their journey as before.

They next arrived at a third recess, in which they found all the apples that would have come from the tree had it lived to its full time. The apples were of purest gold, and the youngest brother was so enchanted at the sight of such wondrous riches that he refused to go any higher. "This is the treasure I love best in the world," said he; and accordingly set to work to carry off the golden apples as fast as he could, quite regardless of his little sister, who,

deserted by all her brothers, was left to mount to the top of the tree alone. When she arrived there she found only a bird's nest, but as large as all the nests that would have been built in the tree if it had lived to its full time. In the nest she found four eggs as large as all the eggs that would have been laid in the nest had the tree lived out all its days. On each of these eggs was written a line in golden letters. On the first were these words :

“ Seek in me a drunkard's bride.”

On the second :

“ Here a spendthrift shall abide.”

On the third :

“ Here a miser gold may hide.”

And on the fourth :

“ Me you may divide.”

On touching the eggs the maiden perceived that they diminished so much in size that she could easily carry them ; so she tied up an egg in each corner of her apron, and descending the winding staircase, found her brothers, who, having emptied the tree of its treasures, were standing together and disputing as to which of the three had obtained the greatest riches. As soon as they caught sight of their sister they flew to her, and eagerly asked what luck had fallen to her share ; but when she showed them her four eggs they laughed at her for a simpleton, and were very merry at her expense.

They then returned home together, but things were, alas ! completely changed from the happy

time when they had all lived so merrily and affectionately with one another.

Sad to say, the eldest brother did nothing but drink of the sap he had obtained from the tree, from morning till night. The second brother, who had secured the silver leaves, squandered his riches in the most foolish manner possible, and leaving the cottage he had formerly shared with his brothers and sisters, built himself a fine castle, where he gave himself up to all sorts of diversions and sports. While the younger brother, who had taken possession of the golden apples, loved his treasure so very dearly that he could not bear to part with a single farthing. He had his apples all coined into golden guineas, which he kept locked up in strong boxes, and spent the greater part of his time in counting them; at last he almost grudged himself a crust of bread to eat.

The little maiden now led a very sorrowful, lonely life, and earned but a little money, although she sat at her wheel spinning flax all day long. One day, however, she bethought herself of the eggs she had found in the tree, and hoped that they might help her in her need. She therefore went to her drawers, and taking out her apron, untied one corner, and out dropped the egg on which was written,

“ Seek in me a drunkard’s bride.”

Carrying it quickly to her eldest brother, she besought him to open it, but no sooner had he done so than out jumped a most hideous old woman of a repulsive and loathsome aspect, dressed in rags and tatters, and shaking all over as with the palsy. This horrible hag then rushed up to the unfortunate young man, and clasping him closely round the neck

with her skinny arms, sang out in a shrill voice these words :

“ I am thine, and thou art mine,
Till is found the charm divine
Which shall make thee loathe thy wine.”

It is easy to imagine how the poor sister wept and lamented, and resolved not to open any more of the eggs lest worse harm should befall ; but by and by the second brother came to her, saying : “ I have spent all I have in the world and have been obliged to sell my fine castle ; therefore I am without a roof to shelter me. Give me I pray you, the egg on which is written :

“ ‘ Here a spendthrift shall abide.’ ”

So his sister brought him the egg, but lo and behold ! no sooner had he broken it than it fell to the ground, and formed a large iron cage which completely inclosed him, and from which all hope of escape seemed impossible. At this the maiden wept most bitterly. “ Why,” said she, “ am I doomed to so many misfortunes ? Was ever maiden so hapless as I ? ”

While her tears yet flowed, the youngest brother approached her and said : “ I dreamed last night that robbers broke into our dwelling and stole my chests of gold, and I fear that this may really prove the case, for I know not where to hide my chests out of sight. Fetch me immediately, I beg of you, the egg on which is written :

“ ‘ Here a miser gold may hide.’ ”

His sister besought him to have nothing to do

with such unlucky eggs. "See to what they have brought our brothers," said she.

But the miser instantly replied: "Yes, one was a drunkard and the other a fool, but I am a wise man and fear no harm; so bring me the egg at once or it shall go ill with you."

The sister dared no longer refuse, and brought him the third egg without delay. But as soon as he had broken it out came a large stone coffin, which, falling upon the miser and his chest of gold, shut him up in a living grave.

"Now," said the maiden, "I will open the fourth egg, for no more misfortunes can possibly happen, and good may yet be in store for me." She therefore cracked the remaining egg, and drew out of it first one golden spade, a second, a third; then a golden spinning-wheel, and lastly, a small golden casket, on which was written these lines:

"The charm contained in me
Will set thy brothers free."

The casket contained nothing more nor less than the missing heart and brain of the good father, embalmed in sweet-smelling herbs and spices, and the little maiden, overjoyed at the recovery of such a treasure, lost not a moment in hastening to the relief of her unfortunate brothers. She first applied the charm to the drunkard, and the wine he was carrying to his lips changed to toads and adders in an instant. Filled with disgust, he dashed the cup away, and his horrible bride at the same moment loosed him from her fatal grasp and disappeared with a shriek of rage. The good sister next sought the imprisoned spendthrift, whose iron cage melted away like wax at the magic touch of the charm.

Lastly, the miser was released from his living tomb with all his chests, which, when opened, proved to contain nothing but ashes. The three brothers then embraced their dear sister with great affection, and thanked her more than a thousand times for the invaluable services she had rendered them; but the maiden replied: "All is not yet finished. Take each of you a golden spade as my gift, and let the first use you make of it be to dig under the ever-green that shades my window, and deposit the precious casket there."

The brothers gladly obeyed; and the next day, after smoothing the turf over this hallowed spot, they shouldered their spades and hired themselves to a farmer to dig. Thanks to their golden spades they could each dig as much in one day as an ordinary laborer would have done in six, and you may imagine their joy when they carried home to their sister in the evening a week's earnings for a day's labor, and found that in the meantime she had spun at her golden wheel as much flax in one day as she could before have done in six.

All went well, therefore, in future with the young people, who lived together for the remainder of their lives—happy, industrious, and united, and who never regretted the lesson they had received from their neglect of the wonderful apple tree.

HAZEL AND FAIR; OR, THE FLIES' HOSPITAL.

A GOOD king, who had long ruled his kingdom well and happily, was conquered in battle by a powerful enemy, and at last was forced to fly from his kingdom with the queen and his two sons, to seek his living as best he could in the wide world.

The unfortunate king, thus driven away from his beautiful palace and deprived of all his riches, did not waste his time in fruitless sorrow, but setting to work as cheerfully as he could, he built a pretty little hut in the midst of a wood, and while the queen cooked, washed, and spun for the family, the king employed himself and his two sons in making baskets from the rushes and osiers that grew hard by, which they sold at the nearest town, and so earned a scanty subsistence by their labor.

Now the two princes, who were born on the same day, were both extremely handsome; they also strongly resembled each other in person, but the elder prince's hair was the color of a hazelnut, and the younger prince's curls shone like gold, so the queen had named them Prince Hazel and Prince Fair. The likeness between these two brothers did not, however, extend to their tempers, and never indeed was there a greater contrast in this respect; for whereas Prince Fair was always contented and cheerful, Prince Hazel thought himself very hardly used to be obliged to work for his living, and though he durst not show his ill-humor to his parents, yet

he was so cross and selfish in his behavior to Prince Fair that if that amiable young man had not possessed the sweetest disposition in the world he could not have borne it for a day. As it was, he very frequently performed not only his own share of work, but also that which Prince Hazel was too indolent to finish himself, for, said the kind brother to himself, "Poor Hazel seems to feel his troubles more than I do."

One evening, after the day's labor was ended, the two young princes were resting by the side of a small stream, whence they procured the rushes and osiers for their baskets, when Prince Fair's attention was attracted by seeing a vast number of flies clustered together in the hollow of a tree which stood on the banks, and the branches of which dipped into the stream. A little wild honey was the cause of these flies assembling, as the young prince soon perceived when he had walked up to the tree, and he could not help laughing to see how the silly insects fought and scrambled over this bit of honey, just as greedily as if there had not been enough and to spare for all if they had taken things quietly.

"There are many kings who must have learned their lesson from you," thought Prince Fair.

Just at this moment a little timid and inoffensive fly, which had only ventured on the very edge of the honey, was roughly pushed aside by a bouncing bluebottle in the most spiteful manner, and falling over into the water on its back was quickly submerged by the force of the current. Snatching it from the water, apparently quite dead, Prince Fair laid the little creature on a rose leaf, and scraped some chalk over it from a lump which he happened to have in his pocket, and in a few minutes, as the chalk sucked the moisture from the

fly's delicate limbs, it began to thrust out first one leg and then another from beneath the mountain of powder which encumbered it.

Prince Fair was so intent upon his occupation that he did not hear the approach of Prince Hazel, who, being quite tired of his own company, now came to see what on earth could keep his brother so long near the tree. "Sugar, I declare!" cried he, greedily stretching his arm over his brother's shoulder to seize a pinch of the powdered chalk.

"Do not—oh, do not eat my poor fly!" exclaimed Prince Fair, hastily intercepting the approaching fingers from his little patient.

"Eat your fly!" returned Prince Hazel indignantly; "pray, do you take me for a spider?"

"No one could mistake you for so industrious an insect," said Prince Fair, laughing; "but see my drowned fly has now quite recovered, and will soon fly away as gayly as ever. Does not this surprise you?"

"I think it is capital fun," said Prince Hazel, mightily pleased with this new amusement; "so lend me your piece of chalk and find me plenty of drowned flies, my good fellow, and I will cure them for you as long as you please."

Prince Fair, with a smile, complied with Hazel's request, and finding a great many drowned flies in the stream, he quickly and skillfully wove a little house of rushes and set it beneath the tree, placing on it, in letters small enough for flies to read, this inscription: "Hospital for Drowned Flies." Within this hospital Prince Fair arranged several neat little rows of beds formed of leaves and moss; and in another apartment he next day placed nut-shell boxes filled with sugar, treacle, and, in short, every dainty that could tempt a sick fly's appetite.

Prince Hazel was highly delighted with the little building, and passed all his leisure time with Prince Fair in attending to his insect patients.

After some time, the honey being eaten from the hollow tree, the flies no longer assembled in such numbers, and the little leafy beds were at last unoccupied for many days together, which greatly annoyed Prince Hazel, who now grumbled and yawned more than ever for want of something better to do. Even Prince Fair could not but regret the loss of his occupation: and when, one evening, seated alone by the stream, he saw a wounded fly crawling feebly on the river bank, he felt half-tempted to push it into the water, in order that he might have the pleasure of conveying to Hazel a new patient for the hospital.

The next instant he blushed with shame for his cruel thought, and taking the little fly tenderly in his hand, he laid it in the center of a pretty red flower which grew near. "Rest in safety, poor fly," said he, "and if to-morrow you are still here you shall have a charming breakfast of fruit and honey. As the young prince turned to depart he was startled by hearing his name pronounced in a clear, silvery tone; he looked up and he looked down, but nothing could he see save the fly in the red flower.

"I am dreaming," thought the prince, "for surely flies cannot speak."

"Prince Fair, Prince Fair," was again repeated, and this time there could be no mistake about it; it *was* the fly who spoke, and as the astonished youth looked at her, she changed through all the colors of the rainbow, and grew larger and larger till she turned into the most exquisite fairy that eyes ever beheld; her wings were of purple and gold, her dress was formed of woven stars, and in

her hand she held a wand, on the top of which shone a ruby fly of a wonderful luster to behold.

“Noble and generous Prince Fair,” said the fairy, “I am the Fairy Firefly, and once in every hundred years I am compelled to assume the form of a common fly, or I should lose my fairy power; while in that disguise you have twice saved my life, and you shall not find me ungrateful. An old witch, who is my greatest enemy, took the form of a blue-bottle, and pushed me into the water on the day you so kindly rescued me, and this morning she bruised my wing with the seed of a fig, so that I might have been trampled on and crushed had it not been for your assistance. Here are two boxes,” continued she, “one of which will give you riches and grandeur for yourself, and the other will enable you to bestow anything you desire on those you love. Say, Prince Fair, which of these two boxes shall be yours?”

“Madam,” said the prince, bowing low to the fairy, “I esteem myself so fortunate in having rendered you a service that I cannot do better than choose the box which may perhaps give me the same happiness on a future occasion.”

At this the fairy blushed and smiled, for the noble and handsome young man looked every inch a prince, in spite of his coarse clothes, and no one could turn a compliment with a better grace or a more courtly wit than he could. Then she presented Prince Fair with a diamond casket, and said: “Whenever you desire to perform a kind action, you will always find in this box a single tear, which you must drop into your right eye, and whatever you wish for will instantly come to pass.”

Saying these words the beautiful Firefly smiled kindly on the prince, and spreading her glittering

wings, disappeared behind some rosy clouds in the western sky, leaving him almost unable to believe in his good fortune.

Soon after this Prince Hazel also wandered to the river bank to see if, by any lucky chance, he might meet with a patient for the hospital. As he was looking about, he too perceived a wounded fly crawling feebly and painfully along (for the fairy, in order to try him, had again assumed this form), and you may be sure that, unlike his tender-hearted brother, this selfish prince did not pause to think of the needless pain he might be giving a helpless insect, but twitching the fly into the water with the point of his stick, he held it under until it was to all appearance dead; scarcely, however, had he taken it up to carry it to the hospital when he suddenly dropped it in a great fright, for the fly felt in his hand for all the world like a red-hot coal, and no sooner had it fallen to the ground than it grew larger and larger as before, until it changed into a fairy, but this time in the shape of a little old woman in a scarlet cloak, a high-crowned hat, and red-heeled shoes. With a gracious smile she hobbled up to Prince Hazel, who was shaking in his shoes with terror at the very unexpected appearance of the old lady, and offered that young prince his choice of the two boxes as she had before done to Prince Fair.

“Oh, ho!” thought Hazel, “fairies are not so wise as they would have one think, for this old simpleton does not seem to have the least idea that I gave her a ducking for my own amusement, and besides is foolish enough to ask me to choose between rich and powerful myself, or making other people so;” then said he aloud: “I choose the box

which will give me the power of being the richest king in all the world."

"Take this golden box, then," replied the fairy, "and whenever you wish you will only have to sprinkle on the ground the pinch of gold dust which it will always contain, and your wish will be immediately granted; but remember that though nothing is so grand that you may not possess it yourself, yet you can do no good to others with your wealth."

"That is of no consequence at all," cried Hazel impatiently, and scarcely waiting to thank the fairy for her generosity, he snatched the golden box from her hand, and ran off wild with delight at thinking of all the fine things he might now have for the wishing.

The first use which Prince Fair had made of his diamond box had been to wish that his dear parents might be restored to their palace and kingdom, for he could not bear to think that they, who had once been the highest in the land, should now have to work as hard as the poorest laborers for their living; and when Prince Hazel reached that spot in the wood where the little hut used to stand, he found in its place a palace of gold and ivory, at the door of which stood his father and mother dressed with great magnificence, with crowns on their heads and surrounded by all the lords and ladies of the court.

At Hazel's approach Prince Fair sprang forward to embrace him. "Dearest brother," said he, "our dear father and mother are once more restored to their kingdom; and for yourself you have henceforth only to express a wish, and I will employ the gift of a kind fairy to grant you instantly your desire."

Hazel turned coldly and sullenly from his brother's embrace, for his envious temper could not en-

dure that any but himself should be gifted by the fairies. "I do not need your help, Prince Fair," said he; "for you must not think you are the only one thus favored; you may keep your precious gifts for those who want them; for my part, I shall wish for a kingdom a hundred times larger than my father's, which appears to me very paltry and insignificant, and I will have, besides, a palace of jewels and heaps of treasure."

Hazel then opened his box and sprinkled the ground with the golden dust, and immediately there appeared on the opposite side of the lake a palace of diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, almost too dazzling to behold, and surrounded by trees and shrubs which bore jewels instead of leaves; the fountains in this enchanted kingdom played liquid pearls, and the feathers of the birds which sang in the groves were pure gold and silver. Hazel next wished for a dress suitable to his rank, and he instantly found himself clothed in a suit of crimson velvet and white satin wrought with gold and blazing with gems; a purple velvet cap looped with diamonds and surmounted by a snow-white plume completed his attire, the magnificence of which I want words to describe. A fine white horse, with suitable attendants, next appeared at the prince's wish, and taking leave coldly of his parents and brother, King Hazel mounted his steed and departed to his kingdom, leaving the generous Prince Fair more grieved at his unkindness than envious of his good fortune.

When King Hazel passed the golden gates of his kingdom the people ran out in crowds to welcome their new monarch, and shouted with joy at his handsome and noble appearance, and many of the poor and the old pressed round him and begged for charity. Hazel carelessly flung gold and jewels

among them, but no sooner had they touched the glittering treasure than it turned into dust and ashes ; so the people grew very angry and imagined that the king mocked at their misery for his own amusement. Nevertheless, whatever Prince Hazel wished for, to add to his own magnificence, was granted immediately, and it was only when he attempted to give to others that his riches failed him.

He dined every day on the most sumptuous dishes ; he lay in a bed of softest down, or reclined on couches of velvet and brocade ; but there was one thing which the king could not obtain, and that was happiness, for the poorest subject in the kingdom was less miserable than the king soon became in his diamond palace. His jewels and treasures served to give him no pleasure, and indeed became of no more value in his sight than the stones on the seashore ; and as for his servants and nobles, they hated him, though they were compelled to serve him because of his great power. All this did not improve his temper ; he grew more cruel and selfish every day of his life, and never were subjects cursed with so wicked a king.

One of his favorite amusements was to drive a chariot drawn by nine fierce horses furiously through the streets, riding over all he met, till the city was frequently strewn with the legs and arms of people he had killed by the way. One day when he was occupied in this manner he saw a little old woman in the middle of the road, dressed in a scarlet cloak, high-crowned hat, and red-heeled shoes—in fact, the very same fairy who had given him the golden box and all his grandeur. At the sight of her the horses stopped of their own accord, and would not stir a step, which made the king quite beside himself with rage.

“Good luck and good morrow to your grace,” said the little woman, with a low courtesy.

“Out of the way, you old witch,” shouted the king, “or I will pound you to a jelly!”

“Nay, your majesty,” replied the fairy, “you would scarcely do that for old acquaintance’ sake; and besides, knowing that so great a king will need a bride worthy of him, I have trudged many a mile over hill and dale to bring you the portrait of the Golden Beauty.”

“Who is the Golden Beauty?” asked the king, somewhat appeased.

“She is the loveliest princess on the face of the earth,” replied the fairy, “and she is compelled to sit in the Crystal Cave under the seven marble rocks until that prince shall seek her who can bring her the most precious gift in all the world. Will you not try your chance, O king?”

The fairy then presented Hazel with a small miniature, set round with pearls, and taking off her high-crowned hat, she sat down on it, and it mounted with her into the air and disappeared in the twinkling of an eye.

No sooner had the king looked at the portrait of the Golden Beauty than he fell violently in love with her, and he vowed he would neither eat nor sleep till he had won her for his wife. So, never doubting that the golden box would prove the most precious gift in the world to the princess, he mounted his horse and rode for seven nights and seven days till he arrived at the Crystal Cave where the Golden Beauty was imprisoned. The gates of the cave flew open at the approach of the illustrious suitor, and Hazel was almost blinded by the dazzling beauty of the princess, whose charms threw a golden light on all around her; but when he knelt

before her and offered her his gift she laughed scornfully and said :

“ The Golden Beauty has no need of riches which turn to dust and ashes in the giving : see you not, O king ! that my beauty outshines the purest gold, and that diamonds are but as worthless pebbles to the brightness of my eyes.”

As she spoke a thick veil descended and hid her from the king's sight, and though he tugged and pulled, he could neither tear nor push it aside, and so was forced to depart without again seeing the princess.

On his way home he fell sick with love and rage, and reached his kingdom more dead than alive ; but when his nobles and servants saw his pitiable condition they said : “ We will leave him to himself, for he will be sure to die, and the world will be well rid of such a monster.”

So they took with them all the riches they could lay their hands on and decamped, leaving the sick king alone in his glittering palace.

As soon as the fairy had given the unlucky Hazel the portrait of the Golden Beauty, she sped like the wind till she reached the kingdom of Prince Fair's father, and walking into the city, she heard the bells ringing and the people shouting. “ Pray, what is all this about ? ” said she to the bystanders.

“ You must have dropped from the moon, Goody,” said they, “ not to know that to-day our dear young prince is to be crowned king, for his father is old and tired of the cares of state, and we will have no one but Prince Fair to reign over us in his stead.”

While they spoke thus, a flourish of trumpets was heard, and robed in purple and silver, his golden curls shining beneath a diamond crown, the glorious Prince Fair appeared, riding on a richly caparisoned

horse, and bowing low and gracefully to the people.

"Charity, noble king," cried the old woman, pressing forward in the crowd till she touched the king's stirrup.

"Who asks for charity?" cried Prince Fair, instantly checking his horse and opening his diamond box; "I had hoped that no one in this happy kingdom wanted for anything; but speak, good woman, and your king will give you all you ask."

As he said this the scarlet cloak and high-crowned hat of the old woman flew off, and King Fair beheld once more the sparkling beauty of the Fairy Firefly.

"I see," said she, as the king dismounted and bent low before her, "that you make good use of your gift, and before I take my leave of you forever I will give you the portrait of the Golden Beauty, who alone is worthy to be your queen."

Then the fairy told the young king how to find the princess, and how she waited in the Crystal Cave under the seven marble rocks for the prince who should bring her the most precious gift in all the world. And saying this, Firefly mounted on a sunbeam and departed to Fairyland, leaving Prince Fair more desperately in love with the exquisite beauty of the picture than even Prince Hazel had been before. He, too, believed that his diamond box would please the princess better than anything in the world besides; and having appointed the wisest noble in the land to reign in his absence, he mounted his horse and rode for seven days and seven nights till he too reached the seven marble rocks and the Crystal Cave.

When the handsome Prince Fair approached the Golden Beauty, the cave shot forth living rays of gold in the splendor of her smile, but she rejected

the diamond box, as she had before refused the golden casket of King Hazel. "Alas," said she, "this is not the gift which will win me for your bride. Have you, O prince, nothing that will be more precious to me?"

"Then," said the young prince, "I offer you, madam, the crown of my happy kingdom and all that it contains." But the princess still shook her head, and tears like diamonds fell from her starry eyes.

"Cruel Firefly, you have deceived me," thought the prince.

"Farewell, dear princess," said he mournfully, "we are parted forever; for I can offer you nothing more than the love of a true heart."

"And that," said the beauty, with a smile like a sunbeam, "is the gift which is the most precious in the world to me, and I will be your fond and faithful wife."

Then she gave the prince her hand, and they departed to the prince's kingdom, over which they reigned happy and beloved to their lives' end.

But what became of King Hazel I have never been able to discover; for though when King Fair heard of his sickness he sought for him anxiously that he might effect his cure with the diamond casket, he was nowhere to be found, and no doubt was carried off by evil spirits, and his kingdom has since entirely disappeared.

A PIG FOR AN HOUR.

IN those good old days when fairies still danced on the green swards of merry England, there lived a worthy farmer and his wife, whom Providence had blessed with an only son, who was known far and wide by the name of Fat Wilfrid. This boy was the delight of his parents, who were wont to boast, in the pride of their hearts, that his match was not to be found in all the country round; his legs and arms were like plump sausages; his body was as round as a cannon-ball, and his cheeks were puffed out to the size and color of boiled apple dumplings; and if you had only once seen him eat his dinner, you would never have forgotten the sight! yet, notwithstanding the substantial nature of his meals, Wilfrid did nothing but grumble from morning till night at the scantiness of his diet.

It chanced, one New Year's eve, that a party of friends and neighbors were gathered closely round the ample chimney corner of the good farmer and his wife; and after awhile they fell to talking on the wonderful things which had been done in their young days by the fairies, or good people, as they called them. One old gossip related how that she had once wished health and happiness to the good people over a mug of ale, and the next morning had found her cows ready milked, and the pails standing in the dairy. Another told a story of a slatternly serving-maid, who, whenever she had slighted her work, was punished by such cramps and pinchings at night that she was fain to leave her bed and per-

form her task properly, in order to obtain any sleep at all. But the only tale which at all engaged Wilfrid's fancy was that of a poor woman, who, when she and her children were nearly starving, did not refuse to share her last crust with an aged beggar at her gate, and was rewarded by finding in her miserable cottage, the next morning, a large box, which she found to be filled with no end of good things, both roast and boiled; and the best of which was, that no sooner was one dainty eaten than another appeared in its place. This tale produced a great longing in Wilfrid's mind for just such another box, and he wished this wish, morning, noon, and night, for so long a time that at last he chanced to hit upon the lucky moment when everybody's desires are granted, and a large box, made of rich plum cake, jumped up through the floor before him so suddenly that the surprise almost took away his breath. On the lid of the chest these lines were traced in caraway comfits :

Stuff your best from the fairies' chest,
Tart, custard, apple, or fig ;
For an hour then appear unto men
In the shape of a large white pig.

Small heed did Wilfrid pay to these lines, though, in picking out and eating the sugar-plums of which they were composed, he could scarcely avoid reading them. He then opened his box and wished, first for roast goose and plum pudding, and afterward for tarts, mince pies, custards, peaches, nectarines, and sweetmeats, all of which issued from the wonderful chest at his desire, and were devoured by him with amazing rapidity one after another. The dinner-bell sounding loudly through the house put an end to his feast; for as he was never a minute too

late in a usual way, and indeed was frequently seated at the table a quarter of an hour before anybody else, he feared that his absence on the present occasion might cause some surprise; therefore, having no mind to share his treasure with others, he closed his box with a sigh, and prepared to join the dinner party. But what was the surprise of all those assembled, when the door opened and a large white pig walked slowly into the room and seated himself with much gravity and composure in the place usually occupied by Wilfrid.

You will already have guessed that the pig was no other than Wilfrid himself, who, being unconscious of the extraordinary change in his appearance, was quite bewildered by the mingled screams and laughter which greeted his entrance. He opened his lips to demand the reason of this rude behavior, but to his astonishment he found he could do nothing but grunt. And the farmer setting the example, kicks and pokers were employed to drive the supposed intruder from the house, the door of which was slammed upon him so sharply that a bit of his tail was snapped off in consequence.

This painful circumstance, coupled with his singular voice, convinced Wilfrid of his misfortune; he now remembered the sugar-plum lines on his box, but consoled himself by the reflection that an hour would soon pass away, and that he should then resume his own shape. His troubles, however, were not ended for that day.

Lost in his own thoughts, he was strolling gently along the paths of the garden, when John the gardener, perceiving a large white pig making itself very much at home among his cabbages and lettuces, ran at him, spade in hand, and drove him out into the village at full trot. A score of ragged boys

were then kind enough to take an active interest in the chase, and between them all the poor pig was hunted up and down with sticks and stones till he was almost ready to die with heat and fatigue.

When an hour afterward he appeared before his anxious mother in his own shape, but crimson from his violent exercise, and panting for breath, his affectionate parent imagined that he must be in a high fever, and insisted on putting him to bed, with a mustard plaster to the soles of his feet, and a black draught for his supper.

Soon after this Wilfrid determined to enjoy another feast from his wonderful chest; but bearing in mind his former misadventures, he thought to manage matters more cleverly on the present occasion. Having wished for turkey and sausages, creams, jellies, cheese cakes, gingerbread, and melons, he conveyed each dainty, as it appeared, to an empty pigsty in the farmyard, and then repaired to that charming retreat to enjoy his repast in peace and safety—sagely observing, as he devoured his meal with much relish, that no one could possibly evince much surprise should they chance to catch sight of him in his present abode. Having made an end of all, he accordingly turned as quietly and comfortably into a pig as he could desire, and finding his sty inconveniently small, he established himself on a snug heap of straw in a warm corner of the farmyard, and was soon sound asleep and snoring.

Now a little black pig, who resided with five brothers and sisters and a tender mother in an adjacent sty, being of an enterprising disposition, chanced to wander to the door of his habitation to learn the state of things in general, and perceiving our sleeping hero on his heap of straw, at first retreated with some precipitation; but after awhile,

feeling reassured by the tranquil appearance of the slumbering stranger, he ventured by degrees to approach him, and at last began playfully to lick his face and ears; his example was followed by his brothers and sisters, and Wilfrid, starting from his nap, found the whole of the charming little creatures licking and gamboling over him in the most engaging manner possible. He had just succeeded in freeing himself from the caresses of these little darlings, when their mother, a sow of venerable and portly aspect, issued forth to learn the cause of the unusual commotion among her little ones. But no sooner had she cast her eyes on Wilfrid than she exclaimed: "Can it be? yes it is; it is my long-lost brother Porkus," and flinging herself upon him, embraced him so fondly that, being quite unprepared for so affectionate a relative, he tumbled with her off his heap of straw, and rolled about in the farm-yard puddle for some time before he succeeded in escaping from his very unpleasant situation.

By this time the hour was on the point of expiring, and right glad was he to reassume his own shape once more. At the same moment he heard his father calling loudly, "Wilfrid! Wilfrid!"

"Here I am, father," cried Wilfrid, who being happily ignorant that the traces of his recent roll in the farmyard were faithfully transferred to his blue jerkin, made his appearance before his parents in such a dirty plight that he received a thrashing for his pains, such as he was not likely to forget till the day of his death.

You will imagine that after all this Wilfrid would have had enough and to spare of his mischievous box; but no such thing, for he soon began to long more than ever for another feast, and sought for a suitable opportunity to indulge his wishes. One

day, his father being absent at a neighboring fair, and his mother busily engaged in household matters, Wilfrid perceived the coast clear for his purpose; he therefore ate and drank his fill, and then slunk quietly and unperceived out of the house, hoping to escape observation, in the early dusk of a winter afternoon; he reckoned, however, without his host, as you shall hear.

A butcher and his son who had been to the fair, in quest of fat beasts for the slaughterhouse, were just then returning from their expedition with very scanty success, and casting their eyes on Wilfrid as he skulked along under the hedges, they were much struck by his goodly size and excellent condition.

“This fellow,” said they, “is the very pig for us, and is worth a long price.” They accordingly went to every house in the village in order to find out the owner of the fat white pig, but no one claimed to be its possessor.

Things being thus, “findings are havings,” quoth the butcher to his son, and popping Wilfrid into their cart, in spite of his screams and struggles, they drove off at full gallop, leaving him plenty of leisure to indulge his reflections in company with a couple of calves and half a dozen sheep similarly situated.

Was ever boy in such a plight? His bristles rose with horror as he heard the butcher declare to his son that he should kill the pig as soon as he got home, in order that he might be ready to cut up early the next day; he even learned which part of himself was destined for the spit, and which for pickling.

“Alas,” cried he, “if the butcher reach home within the next half hour I am a dead pig. O

mother! mother! how little do you know that your beautiful Wilfrid will soon be nothing but a lifeless heap of pickled pork!" And overwhelmed with the poignancy of this idea, he vented his lamentations in shrieks and grunts that would have melted any heart but that of a butcher.

Fortunately for him the butcher's drive occupied some time, and when, having nearly reached his journey's end, he turned round to look once more at his prize, he was dumfounded to perceive that no pig was there, but in its place a fat boy in a blue jerkin, crying and blubbering as though his heart would break. At this alarming sight the butcher and his son were ready to sink with terror, thinking for certain that they were bewitched; they therefore began to say their prayers as fast as they could mutter them, and bundling Wilfrid neck and crop out of the cart, drove off with all the speed they could muster.

Bruised, stunned, and bleeding from the effects of his tumble, poor Wilfrid picked himself slowly up and endeavored to find his way home; but it was now quite dark, and he could no longer discern the road. Many mishaps did he meet with from bog and bramble before, weary and footsore, he arrived in the early dawn at the door of his own home, where he found a warm welcome waiting him from his fond parents, who, distracted with grief at the absence of their darling child, had spent the night in searching for him far and wide. Wilfrid now confessed his adventures to his father and mother, and was easily prevailed upon by them to bury his unlucky box a hundred feet deep in the earth. You will be pleased to hear that his mishaps were not unattended with a good result; and if, some few years after, you had chanced to pass through the village

where the old farmhouse stood, you could scarcely have recognized in the handsome, rosy-cheeked young fellow, following his plow and whistling to his team, the once puffed and bloated face and form of Fat Wilfrid.

from her shoulders, and she was able to fly as easily as if she had indeed been a bird or a fairy.

Out of the window flew the fairy, and after her went Amabel, and the pair never stopped flying till they had left the clouds behind them. Then Amabel found herself in a most beautiful orchard, such as could be seen nowhere, save in fairyland. Fruit trees of all descriptions were there in abundance, on which danced hundreds of tiny sprites, who seemed to be mightily enjoying themselves. Oranges, apples, pears, plums, and figs bowed down the trees with their ripe clusters, and the clear moon shining over the branches made the leaves look like pure silver. In the midst of the orchard stood a magnificent tree laden with rich, ripe, blackheart cherries, which evidently belonged to Amabel's little fairy, who, perching on its branches, gayly invited her companion to eat as many cherries as she wished for.

Never had Amabel passed so delightful a night. She and the fairy eat and laughed, and danced and sang in the cherry tree all night long, but when the daylight was at hand the fairy said to Amabel:

“ Rosy streaks announce the dawn—
Maiden, thou must now be gone ;
Farewell to me, farewell to thee,
Vanish from the cherry-tree.”

And in the space of half a minute Amabel found herself lying in her own little bed in her own little chamber, which was now faintly illuminated by the first pale beams of the morning.

She would, doubtless, have thought it all a dream, but when she arose and looked at herself in the glass, lo and behold ! her mouth was deeply stained

by such a black rim as nothing but an ample feast of blackheart cherries could have left. "What a fortunate thing that I have discovered this," thought Amabel, who forthwith commenced scrubbing her mouth as well as she could with soap and water; but, notwithstanding all her efforts, no washing would remove the stain of the cherries, and at the end of an hour she was forced to go down to her breakfast with the guilty mark upon her face and ready to sink with fear.

"What can you have been doing to your mouth, Amabel?" was the general exclamation as the unhappy little creature slunk into the room.

"Ah! you have been eating the cherries from my cupboard," cried her mother angrily; "I missed the key from my pocket when I rose this morning, and found it in the cupboard door; but I never suspected you of stealing, though I knew you to be both jealous and sullen."

"Indeed, indeed, mamma, I have not taken any cherries," began Amabel, but stopped in the midst of her speech and blushed very deeply. In the meantime her mother produced from the cupboard the basket which had contained the cherries, but which now was filled with nothing but cherry stones. This, together with the more than suspicious appearance of poor Amabel's face, determined her fate. She was locked up in her own room for a week, and had nothing to eat and drink but bread and water; and when she was once more permitted to mix with the family the cold looks and constrained greeting of all around her were like daggers in the heart of the poor little girl, who felt that she was henceforth to be regarded in the light of a thief and a storyteller.

Things went on thus till one unlucky day, when a

delicious treat of freshly baked cakes, enjoyed by Marion, again awakened the longing of her less fortunate sister. When the cakes were locked away in the cupboard Amabel followed them with her eyes, and during all the day she could think of nothing else. At night she could not rest, and while tossing sleeplessly on her pillow the hour of midnight struck from the neighboring church clock.

As the last sound died away a little voice by Amabel's bedside called "Amabel ! Amabel !" She started up and opened her eyes with astonishment at seeing a pretty little man, a span high, with a cotton nightcap on his head and a white apron before him. There was no mistaking that he was a fairy baker, even if the floury state of his tiny hands and arms had not served to confirm this idea. Dancing about in high glee, the little baker sang these words:

"To the fairies' bakehouse come,
Cakes to eat, both seed and plum—
Almond cakes and ginger too
We will bake all night for you.
Little mortal, feast away,
Till the night be turned to day."

"Oh, pray take me with you at once, dear little baker," cried Amabel; and the little fellow taking her hand, stamped with his foot upon the floor, which immediately opened beneath them, and the both sank several fathoms deep in the earth.

When Amabel had sufficiently recovered from the surprise of her journey to look about her, she perceived that she was in a large bakehouse completely filled by busy little bakers, who were baking the most delicious cakes that can be imagined. Some kneaded the dough, others prepared the cur-

rants, sweetmeats, and spices, and others were constantly taking from the oven newly-baked batches of these tempting dainties, of which Amabel's conductor (who was evidently the chief of the bakers, from the way in which he ordered all the rest about) pressed her to eat to her heart's content.

Thus the night passed in the most agreeable manner possible, but when day was at hand the fairy said to Amabel:

“ Day is come, work is done,
Little maiden, hasten home.”

And in a trice Amabel was lying snugly in her little bed, for all the world as if she had been there all night; but when she rose there were crumbs sticking to her mouth which neither rubbing nor scrubbing would remove; so at last she was forced to abandon the attempt, and go down to breakfast in a terrible fright. As soon as she appeared she saw her mother standing by the door of the open cupboard, holding in her hand the dish which had yesterday been full of cakes, but which now was empty save for a few crumbs.

In spite of Amabel's tears and protestations she was not believed. “ The wicked child,” said her mother, “ will persist in her falsehoods, when the very crumbs from her feast remain upon her face to prove her guilt.”

The poor child, therefore, now fared worse than ever.

The preference formerly shown to Marion was now quite undisguised, and Amabel sometimes had a hard struggle to prevent herself from showing, in her behavior to her little sister, the bitterness which continued injustice could not fail to engender in

her childish heart ; but she did struggle with all her generous and affectionate soul, and bore her trial meekly and bravely too.

Some time after this a large box of sweetmeats was sent as a present to Amabel and Marion from a kind uncle. Amabel had been ailing for some days, and for that reason no sweetmeats were given to her, though Marion as usual was permitted to enjoy the treat which was denied to her suffering sister.

When the box was locked away in the large cupboard, however Amabel steadfastly turned away her eyes, and would not permit a single wish for the sweetmeats to disturb her. And when she lay in her little bed that night she said her prayers calmly and peacefully, and was soon sleeping the happy slumber of the innocent and good.

As the clock struck twelve she was aroused by the sound of her own name, uttered in a sweet small voice, such as she had heard twice before, and opening her eyes she saw a tiny creature, formed of barley sugar, jumping about on her pillow and singing :

“ Come with me to the Sugar Cane Isle,
And dwell with the sweetmeat sprites a while ;
Sugar plums drop from the loaded trees,
Citron and orange peel scent the breeze—
Haste, then, to Sugar Cane Isle away,
And feast till the night be turned to day.”

As he jumped about in the joy of his heart, a golden light played through his transparent form, and he looked so tempting and delicious that it was difficult for Amabel to restrain her desire of catching him up and eating him at a mouthful. She therefore closed her eyes, and would not look at him again. So after a while the little creature

took himself off in a huff, and Amabel shed a few quiet tears for the delights she had lost in refusing to accompany him to Sugar Cane Isle.

The church clock soon after struck one, and behold the cherry-tree fairy appeared by Amabel's bedside and sang :

“ Little maiden, come with me
To the fairy cherry tree ;
There with me to feast and play
Till the night be turned to day.”

But Amabel shook her head and said to the pretty sprite, “ Nay, little fairy, I may not visit the cherry tree to-night ;” and though the fairy touched her with her tiny hand, and did all that she could to persuade her, she remained firm in her determination, and the cherry-tree fairy vanished at last in a pet, without her playfellow.

The clock now struck two, and in the same instant the fairy baker stood by Amabel, capering about and singing :

“ To the fairies' bakehouse come,
Cakes to eat, both seed and plum ;
Almond cakes and ginger too
We will bake all night for you ;
Little maiden, with us stay,
Till the night be turned to day.”

But the good child turned as deaf an ear to the baker as she had done to the others, and after a while he bustled off in a very angry and disconsolate state at the ill success of his endeavors.

The clock now struck three, and all at once so splendid a radiance illumined the little chamber that it surpassed the light of noonday. And Amabel, on opening her eyes, found the room quite full

of sprites singing and rejoicing like little birds in spring-time. Cherry-tree fairies, baker fairies, and sweetmeat fairies were there in multitudes, but by the bedside stood a fairy of resplendent beauty, taller by a full inch than her companions, and of so lively and majestic an appearance that Amabel knew her at once to be no other than the fairy queen herself. She therefore sprang from her bed and acknowledged the honor of this royal visit by kneeling at the feet of her illustrious guest.

The fairy queen smiled kindly and graciously upon her, and then sang as follows in a voice resembling that of a bird of paradise :

“ Fly with me, maiden of mortal mold,
To my bowers of light and my halls of gold ;
Such blossoms of beauty there thou’lt see
As beseem a royal gift to thee ;
Haste, dearest maiden, and fear not me.”

Glancing upward at the lovely queen, and reading in her mild and serene aspect the encouragement of feeling that she should be doing no wrong, Amabel declared her readiness to accompany her majesty, and a blue and silver chariot, drawn by twelve milk-white doves, appeared instantly through the window, which opened by its own accord to admit it.

The fairy queen seated herself in this charming equipage, and motioned Amabel to take the place by her side ; and, as quick as thought, the doves flew through the air with them, accompanied by the whole of the fairy court.

On they went with the speed of the wind, leaving the clouds behind them, till the chariot stopped before a palace of pure gold, surrounded by gardens of such enchanting beauty as mortal eye never before beheld. Alighting from her chariot, the fairy

queen then entered the palace, leading Amabel by the hand, and conducted her to a magnificent banquet hall formed of pearls and emeralds, where they found a sumptuous repast awaiting them; their entertainment being completed by a melodious concert from the attendant fairies, who sang their sweetest songs to add to the pleasure of their beloved queen and her mortal friend. The banquet being at an end, the queen conducted Amabel into the gardens of the palace, where flowers of all descriptions were blooming in great beauty and profusion, and after passing through such scenes of loveliness as I want words to express, they stopped before a parterre of exquisite blossoms, around the slender stems of which hung golden labels, each of which bore an inscription describing the peculiar virtues of the flower it adorned.

On the rose was written beauty, on the lily purity, on the geranium riches, on the azalea rank, and on the tulip wit; but peeping through its dark green leaves, Amabel spied a lovely violet, on which was written:

“ Who chooseth me,
Beloved will be.”

The queen then told her that she was free to choose any one of the flowers for her own. And Amabel pondered for a little space.

“ I should like to be very beautiful,” thought she, “ and rich and noble, and witty; but all these might not win for me the love of my dear parents, and one fond kiss from their lips would be dearer to me than the admiration of the whole world besides. Dear little violet, I will choose you; ah, never, never may I lose your magic power.”

Now the queen could by her fairy art read all the

thoughts which passed through Amabel's mind, and giving her the violet, she also gathered a rose, which, unperceived by the overjoyed little maiden, she gently waved over her, and at that moment she became one of the most beautiful little creatures on the face of the earth; but she was quite unconscious of this change in her appearance, and the mild and gentle modesty of her countenance remained unaltered, and formed one of its greatest charms.

The little fairy sprites, who had been fluttering hither and thither in a restless manner for sometime, not daring to interrupt the royal conference, now began to sing:

“ Royal mistress, haste away,
Ere the coming of the day;
See the sun begins to rise,
Tinging all the eastern skies.
Rest we safe in crystal grot
Where the daybeams scorch us not;
Till the moon, so clear and bright,
Comes to tell us it is night.”

And in less time than it takes to tell you, Amabel found herself lying in her own little bed, with her precious violet clasped closely to her bosom.

The following morning everyone who approached Amabel was astonished by her extraordinary beauty, which they were surprised to think that they had never before remarked. And as for her father and mother, they overwhelmed her with kisses and caresses.

“ How gentle, kind, and forgiving is our darling Amabel,” said they; “ ah! that we had sooner learned to prize her as she deserves.”

Even little Marion clung with greater fondness than ever to her sister. And, thanks to her violet,

the little maiden was for the future as valued and beloved as she had formerly been neglected ; but the fairies visited her nevermore, though often, when the sun was shedding his parting beams over the earth, she fancied she could discern in mid-air the golden turrets of the palace where she had once feasted with the fairy queen, and hear the song the fairies had sung when she left them :

“ Sweet little darling Amabel,
We bid you now a last farewell ;
Never more, dear, will you stand
In golden halls of fairyland,
Or midst its radiant bowers
Bend to gather sweetest flowers.
But thou hast a fairy spell
That will serve thee long and well :
Self-denial gave thee power
To take from us at midnight hour
The charm that wins the gift of love—
A gift all other boons above.
May'st thou that pow'r securely keep.
Adieu, sweet child ; blest be thy sleep ! ”

THE GOLDEN COW.

A KING and queen chanced once upon a time to travel through a gloomy forest, accompanied by their only child, the Princess Isora, who, being an infant of tender age, was carried in the arms of her nurse.

In those days the roads were so bad that carriages could not be used except in the immediate neighborhood of towns and cities; therefore, in so wild a country, the king and queen were forced to travel on horseback, followed by their attendants similarly mounted, but the infant princess and her nurse were carried in a litter, borne on the shoulders of four men, and thus traveled at some little distance behind the rest of the cavalcade. After riding for many hours, night began to fall apace, and the howlings of the wolves and wild beasts which frequented the forest filled the whole party with affright. They galloped on as fast as they could, but all at once a company of hungry and savage wolves rushed out from a neighboring thicket, and springing upon many of the terrified riders, tore them from their horses and devoured them limb by limb.

In the fight which followed, some of the foremost of the party, among whom, of course, were the king and queen, escaped with their lives, though half dead with fright; but the bearers of the litter containing the Princess Isora and her nurse being on foot, were speedily attacked and eaten by the wolves, and the unfortunate nurse, giving up all for

lost, thought to gain a few minutes more before meeting with so horrid a death, and throwing the poor baby to the wolves, she ran off as quickly as her trembling limbs could carry her, expecting every moment to be seized by the fierce pursuers. By a most singular chance she succeeded in escaping from the forest unhurt, but when she found herself in safety she dared not tell the unhappy parents that she had cast their dear little baby to the wolves in order to save herself, but said that one of the animals had snatched it from her arms, and devoured it at a single mouthful : so all hope being over, the king and queen resumed their journey in the greatest affliction, and when they reached their own kingdom the whole court mourned for the loss of the pretty princess ; and as for the queen, she was never seen to smile.

Now a fairy who had been present at the princess' birth had fastened round her neck a fine gold chain of curious workmanship, from which was suspended a small crown composed of diamonds. This chain was a charm to preserve her from a violent death ; therefore the wolves glutted their appetites on the carcasses of the horses they had slain, but did not so much as touch a hair of the royal infant's head. A shepherd who lived hard by, searching in the forest for a lost lamb, discovered the poor little baby the next morning, nearly perished with cold and hunger. He took it in his arms, and warming it tenderly in his bosom, carried it home to his wife, who was equally astonished with himself at the surprising beauty of the little girl, and also at her singular ornament, which, with all their efforts, they could not succeed in detaching from her neck. Having no daughter, they adopted the little stranger as their own, and brought her up with their only

son, a boy of some three years old, named Amyntas.

The fine linen in which the little princess was wrapped when the shepherd found her was embroidered with her name and the royal arms, which convinced the good man and his wife that their little nursling was of royal birth, but they lived in so lonely a place that they could gain no intelligence of her parents, though they did not hesitate to tell the little maiden their suspicions of her real parentage. Accordingly, Isora became very proud and haughty, and when her playfellow Amyntas called her sister, she would say, "I am a king's daughter, Amyntas, and princesses do not call peasant boys brother," which grieved poor Amyntas sadly, for he loved her very tenderly, and there was nothing in the world he would not have done to give her pleasure.

As Isora grew up she was so fair and lovely to behold that nothing like her had ever been seen, and all the young men of the villages round about used to flock to the shepherd's cottage, only to obtain a glimpse of her. Isora, however, treated them all with the greatest disdain; and whenever any of them ventured to ask her hand at the village dances, she would reply, "I will dance with no one but Amyntas."

Yet Amyntas, though favored thus far, was not very successful in his wooing of the proud princess, for to all his entreaties that she would be his wife, Isora would reply, "Princesses do not wed with peasants;" an answer which caused him the greatest affliction.

Nevertheless his love for the cruel beauty was so great that he never ceased to entreat her, till wearied by his importunity she one day said, "I have dreamed for three nights running that a beautiful golden cow came to me and said, 'Pretty princess,

take hold of my golden horns, and mount upon my back, and I will carry you home to the kingdom of your royal parents.' Bring me this cow, Amyntas, and I will be your wife."

Then Amyntas grew very sorrowful at these words, and, forsaking his companions, he neither ate, slept, nor worked, but spent all his days and nights in wandering about the woods and fields, sighing and lamenting his hard fate.

One day, having wandered further than usual from home, he came to a desolate-looking plain, in the midst of which flowed a dark and lonely river, and being fatigued by his long walk, he sat himself down to rest a while on a large stone. As he did so he perceived a little one-eyed dwarf, of very singular appearance, working away with pickax and shovel at a large heap of stones and ashes which stood by the riverside.

The little manikin did not appear to notice Amyntas, but dug away as busily as possible, carrying shovelful after shovelful of the stones and ashes, and throwing them into the river; but the strangest part of the business was, that for every spadeful he threw away two more appeared to be added to the heap, which therefore grew higher and higher the harder he worked. As he dug, the little fellow sang these words in a small shrill voice:

" Into the water the ashes throw,
For one spade thrown two more will grow;
Dig, dig away, for one year and a day,
Who digs for a year and a day, I ween,
Shall behold the cow of golden sheen."

" Say you so, my little friend?" quoth Amyntas. " Give me your pickax and shovel, and I will work for you one year and a day."

Without more ado the one-eyed dwarf handed him his tools, and was for going off without another word, but Amyntas said : "How shall I find the golden cow when I have worked a year and a day ?"

Then the little man lifted up his cracked voice and sang :

"Dig through the stones and ashes deep
And a golden ring through the earth will peep
Which will open the door beneath the heap."

He then hobbled off apparently highly delighted at getting his work done for him so readily.

Left to himself, Amyntas dug away with right good-will ; indeed, so hard did he work that by nightfall the heap was higher than his father's cottage. He rose betimes next morning, and taking food and drink with him to last him three days, he worked so well that at the end of that time the heap was a good-sized hillock. And this he did for many weeks, till at last it was almost half a day's journey to get to the top of his heap before he could begin his work, so that he went home only one day in seven. All this time the good shepherd and his wife thought that Amyntas had surely taken leave of his senses, and he was the laughing-stock of the village ; but Isora did not cease to say : "Bring me the golden cow and I will be your wife."

It was very hard and dreary toil, and often the heart of poor Amyntas would sink within him as he beheld the heap growing higher and higher, and found himself apparently further than ever from the road which was to conduct him to the golden cow ; but for the love of his princess he toiled on all day and almost all night, till, at the end of six months

from the time of his commencement, he perceived that for every shovelful which he dug away another went along with it, so that the heap began to get smaller as fast as it had before increased.

He now labored on cheerfully, and at the end of the year and a day he perceived, to his great joy, a golden ring shining through the earth. He seized it and found that it was attached to a trap-door in the ground, which he pulled open, and a flight of steps were disclosed, down which Amyntas descended with a beating heart, and found himself in a charming meadow, in the midst of which stood a beautiful cow of purest gold. Intoxicated with delight at the sight of this object of his wishes, he sprang forward to seize it, but before he could reach it he felt himself whirled into the air by a strong wind, and the next moment he was standing on the earth in the self-same spot where he had been working for the last twelve months; but no sign of the trapdoor was to be seen, only a large heap of stones and ashes, and the little one-eyed dwarf digging away for all the world as if he had never left off since the unlucky young man had first beheld him.

“How now, you ill-favored little miscreant,” cried Amyntas, half-choked with rage and mortification at this provoking sight; “I will break every bone in your misshapen body if you do not keep your promise.”

There was no reply, and Amyntas, in a towering passion, seized the little man by his throat and shook him till his one red eye threatened to start out of his head. Yet the little fellow did not seem the least concerned, but shook off the rough grasp of his companion as composedly as possible, and

resumed his work, singing in his shrill, cracked voice these words :

“ Into the water the ashes throw,
For one spade thrown two more will grow ;
Dig away, dig away, one year and a day.
Who digs for a year and a day, I ween,
Shall milk the cow of golden sheen.”

“ Milk it yourself,” quoth the young man sulkily, and strode home in a very angry and disconsolate state.

The Princess Isora was waiting for him at the door of the cottage, for he had told her he would certainly bring her home the golden cow that evening ; and when she saw him return alone she became very angry, and would listen to no explanation ; therefore, Amyntas bethought himself that, after all, he had better work for the one-eyed dwarf another year. Who knows, thought he, but that if I may approach the cow near enough to milk her, I may succeed this time in catching her. Comforted by the hope, he trudged to the scene of his former labors, and there stood the stones and ashes, and the busy little manikin digging away like one possessed, all the time singing his ditty :

“ Into the water the ashes throw,
For one spade thrown two more will grow ;
Dig away, dig away, a year and a day.
Who digs one year and a day, I ween,
Shall milk the cow of golden sheen.”

“ Give me the pickax and the shovel,” said Amyntas, “ and I will work for you yet another year and a day.”

No sooner said than done. Away hobbled the

dwarf, and to work poor Amyntas went in his place.

All happened just as before, and at the end of the appointed time the golden ring appeared through the earth; but when Amyntas opened the trapdoor and descended into the meadow, an ivory stool and a silver milking-pail stood by the side of the golden cow. Amyntas, seating himself on the stool, began to milk the cow; but what was his wonder and delight when, instead of milk, shining gold fell into the pail. He milked the pail quite full, and then thought to lead away the cow; but the moment he touched her for that purpose he was whirled, as before, into the air, and once more stood by the river brink, but with his pail of gold by his side.

The ashes and stones were standing on the very spot whence he had descended through the trapdoor, and there, too, was his old friend the dwarf working and singing as merrily as ever.

Amyntas did not stay to listen to the dwarf's song, but hurried home as fast as his legs could carry him, and flung his riches with sparkling eyes before Isora and his parents. As for the latter, they overwhelmed him with caresses and praise.

"Ah," said they, "the good neighbors said that Amyntas was mad, but some folk's madness is wiser than other folk's sense, and for our parts, we always thought our son was a wise youth."

But Isora was not tempted by the wealth of Amyntas, and to all his entreaties she returned the same answer: "I will never be your wife till you bring me home the golden cow."

"Poor Amyntas saw no help for it, and once more was fain to seek his old acquaintance, the one-eyed, dwarf, whose ditty now ran—

“ Into the water the ashes throw,
For one spade thrown two more will go ;
Who works for me days and nights three,
Shall bear the bride to her own countrie ;
Work, work away, by night and by day,
And carry the golden cow away.”

Therefore Amyntas set to work with a lighter heart, and for every spadeful he threw away two more went with it, but he was so weary of his work that the three days and nights seemed as though they would never end.

At last the golden ring appeared to his longing eyes, and when he descended into the meadow there stood the beautiful golden cow decked with wreaths of flowers and evergreens to welcome him.

She did not wait to be sought, but hastening up to Amyntas, knelt down for him to mount on her back, and he had no sooner done so than he found himself, cow and all, safely landed by the river brink, but no heap of stones and ashes was to be seen ; neither was the dwarf visible, only Amyntas heard a shrill, cracked little voice, which could have belonged to no one else, singing these words as he rode home—

“ Stones and ashes are shoveled away,
And the golden cow is won ;
Rejoice and feast by night and by day,
And carry the princess home.”

When Amyntas brought the cow to Isora she thanked him a thousand times, and throwing her arms around his neck, she said : “ I will now consent to be your bride, but let us first seek my dear parents.”

She then mounted on the cow's back behind Amyntas, and the beautiful animal carried them safely to the kingdom of Isora's father and mother.

When they entered the city the good people ran out open-mouthed with wonder at the sight of a handsome youth and a lovely maiden riding on a golden cow, and the king and queen came to the palace windows to ascertain the cause of all the shouting and excitement; but when the cow had reached the palace gates it stopped of its own accord and related the whole wonderful story of the Princess Isora to her astonished parents, who, when they had looked at the gold chain around her neck, knew her instantly to be their long-lost child, and falling on her neck embraced her with great tenderness. As for Amyntas, the king declared that no one was so worthy as he to obtain the princess' hand; and nothing being wanted but the presence of the worthy shepherd and his wife to complete the general happiness, the golden cow was dispatched to seek them, and on their arrival at the court the wedding was celebrated with great splendor and rejoicing.

The young couple lived happily forever after, the golden cow never ceasing to supply them with riches.

THE SILVER DOG AND HIS PUPPIES.

Two pretty young sisters named Constantia and Katharina put on their bonnets and cloaks one fine morning, and taking their brother, little Tomlin, by the hand, set out for a walk through the gay and crowded streets of the city in which they dwelt.

Many were the tempting wares displayed in the shop windows which by turns attracted the longing gaze of the brother and sisters. Now, it was a fine doll, now a sparkling bracelet, or a costly dress of lace or satin, which filled the hearts of the two girls with a vain desire of possession. Tomlin had for his part no eyes to spare from a fine dapple-gray rocking-horse which graced the entrance of a handsome toy shop, and which seemed to him capable of rendering its future owner happier than a prince. Having looked and longed till they felt somewhat weary and discontented, the three children at last turned their footsteps toward home; but their walk was not destined to end without an adventure, for when they were almost within sight of their own dwelling they were met by a silver dog, who jumped upon and caressed them in the most affectionate manner possible.

This pretty little creature was scarcely larger than a squirrel; his two bright eyes shone like diamonds through the clouds of silver hair which hung over his face, and in his mouth he carried a silver basket. Constantia, who, being the eldest of the

three, of course spoke first on all occasions, addressed the silver dog thus :

“ Silver dog, silver dog, tell me, I pray,
Wherefore you wander here to-day ;
Friendless and houseless if hither you roam,
Dear little doggy, pray follow me home.”

But the dog replied :

“ In a hole of the wall my dwelling I make,
My silver puppies I cannot forsake ;
Four silver puppies they wait for me,
Cold and hungry as they can be.
Ah ! fill my basket with bread and with meat.
For weary to-day are my tiny feet.”

Constantia answered :

“ Dear little silver dog, have no fear,
Follow me home to my dwelling near,
Bread and meat you shall have good store
Then hie away home to your puppies four.”

Whereupon the silver dog turned his tail over his back, and followed the children gladly and without suspicion.

As they walked along Constantia pulled Katharina by the sleeve, and said to her :

“ One does not meet with a silver dog every day ; therefore we must not let him go as I have promised.”

“ True, sister,” replied the other ; “ we cannot be expected to give up such a prize, and must do all we can to induce him to remain with us.”

“ Leave all to me,” answered Constantia, “ and do not fear that I shall let him escape.”

Tomlin, overhearing this conversation, did not at all relish the idea of gaining possession of the dog

so treacherously, and declared his intention of giving him fair notice of what he had discovered; but Constantia said to him angrily:

“You are a little simpleton, Tomlin, who will never know how many blue beans make five;” and she and Katherina pinched his arms so hard that he was forced to hold his peace, much against his will.

On arriving at their own door Constantia invited the silver dog into her chamber, saying:

“Rest you a while in my pretty white bed,
While your basket I fill with meat and with bread.”

But no sooner had he crossed the threshold than Constantia turned the key in the lock, and laughing at his dismay, told him that never more should he leave his present quarters, but remain with her, henceforth to be her own little silver dog and the darling of her heart. At this the silver dog commenced crying very piteously, and begged and entreated with all the eloquence at his command for permission to return to his four silver puppies. Constantia, nevertheless, turned a deaf ear to his complaints, and sitting down to her spinning, sang a merry song to drown his murmurs.

After a while the little animal ceased crying, and approaching Constantia, said to her:

“A gown of satin, so smooth and fair,
And a chaplet of pearl for your golden hair,
These you shall have, and my thanks withal,
If you let me return to my home in the wall.”

Now it happened that there was nothing in the world which Constantia so much wished for as a white satin gown and a pearl coronet. Her eyes

sparkled with the hope of possessing such treasures, but looking at the diminutive creature who offered them to her, she could scarcely forbear laughing at her own folly.

“ You talk nonsense, you foolish little dog,” said she ; “ what have you to do with satin and pearls ? ”

Then the dog made answer :

“ Doubt not my power, my fair young maid,
Quickly I'll do what I've sworn and said ;
Three golden hairs in my tail you'll find,
Scatter them each to a separate wind,
North, east, and west, you must blow them away
And a treasure rare will your task repay.”

On which Constantia, looking at the dog's tail, perceived amid the silver hairs three hairs of purest gold. One she blew to the north, another to the east, and a third to the west, and in an instant there lay upon the bed a lovely dress of glossy white satin and a tiara of Oriental pearl. Constantia now hastened to fill the dog's basket with ample store both of bread and meat, whereupon he made her the politest bow imaginable, and turning his tail joyfully over his back hastened home to his four puppies, who no doubt gave him a hearty welcome. When Katherina and Tomlin learned that the silver dog had departed they were much grieved, and Katherina for her part was not sparing of angry reproaches to Constantia for her selfishness in parting with the pretty creature only for her own advantage. Constantia excused herself as well as she could, and patched up the matter by promising that Katherina should be the dog's mistress if they were ever so fortunate as to gain the possession of him again, and though this did not seem very probable, Katherina was fain to content herself with the hope.

A few days elapsed without anything being heard or seen of the silver dog, but returning from a walk one evening Tomlin and his sisters at last caught sight of the little fellow, trotting along just as before, with his basket in his mouth, in search, no doubt, of provisions for his puppies. It was now Katherina's turn to accost him, and accordingly she assumed a fascinating smile and addressed him in these words :

“ Silver dog, silver dog, tell me, I pray,
Wherefore you wander here to-day ;
Friendless and houseless if hither you roam,
Dear little doggy, pray follow me home.”

To which the dog replied :

“ In a hole of the wall my dwelling I make,
My silver puppies I cannot forsake ;
Four silver puppies they wait for me,
Cold and hungry as they can be.
Ah ! fill my basket with bread and with meat,
For weary to-day are my tiny feet.”

Katherina then made answer :

“ Dear little silver dog, have no fear,
Follow me home to my dwelling near,
Bread and meat you shall have withal,
Then hie away home to your hole in the wall.”

Upon which the dog turned his tail over his back and followed Katherina and her companions to their dwelling. When they had reached home the young girl said to the dog :

“ Rest you a while in my pretty white bed,
While your basket I fill with meat and with bread.”

And the credulous little creature accompanied her upstairs into her own room, where she at once secured him by shutting and locking the door. When the silver dog perceived that he was a prisoner he began to cry and to moan as though his heart would break. "Alas!" said he, "my four silver puppies will die of cold and hunger in my absence." But as Katherina paid no heed to his entreaties, after a while he desisted, and approaching her, said:

"Maiden, I'll give you a treasure rare,
A waxen doll so fine and so fair,
With raiment and jewels an ample store,
If you let me return to my puppies four."

Now Katherina had the greatest possible wish for a fine wax doll, as the cunning little dog no doubt knew perfectly well; but looking down at him, she thought to herself, surely such a tiny creature as that cannot bestow what he promises. Guessing, however, what was passing in her mind, the silver dog said:

"Doubt not my power, my fair young maid,
Quickly I'll do what I've sworn and said;
In my right ear three gold hairs you'll find,
Scatter them each to a separate wind,
North, east, west, you must blow them away,
And a fine wax doll will your task repay."

Katherina accordingly looked into the dog's right ear, where she found the three golden hairs, and blowing them to the north, east, and west, as the dog had directed, a large and beautiful wax doll instantly made her appearance, seated in an armchair of gold and ivory, and accompanied by several tiny boxes and cases made also of gold and ivory, containing the most charming collection of doll's clothes that

Katherina had ever beheld. The undergarments were all of the finest lawn, edged with delicate lace and embroidery. The dresses and mantles of lace, satin, and velvet were of the newest and most costly fashions, and the little silver-mounted dressing case contained several sets of dolls' jewels, and all perfect models of fine workmanship and skill.

Katherina now embraced and thanked the silver dog a thousand times, and filling his basket with no sparing hand bade him depart to his puppies without delay; therefore, turning his tail over his back he made his adieux as hastily as was consistent with good breeding, and trotted home as fast as his little legs could carry him.

It was now Tomlin's part to feel somewhat disappointed at the dog's release, and though too gentle to reproach Katherina, yet when he looked at his sister's magnificent gifts he could not forbear thinking, Ah! if the silver dog had but given me the dapple-gray rocking-horse I should not have regretted his loss so much.

Not long, however, was Tomlin destined to wait without a share of good fortune equal to the others. The silver dog met him one evening when he had almost relinquished the hope of ever seeing the little animal again, and perceiving how weary the poor fellow looked, Tomlin had not the heart to deceive him with false promises, but, patting him tenderly on the head filled his basket with some cakes which he was carrying home to his sisters, and bade him depart to his puppies in peace and safety. Whereupon, wagging his tail with grateful affection, the pretty creature said:

“ Dear little Tomlin, ere I depart,
I'll give you a proof of my grateful heart.

In my left ear three gold hairs you'll find ;
Scatter them each to a separate wind,
North, east, west, you must blow them away,
And behold the steed of a dapple gray."

Tomlin joyfully did as the dog requested, and was rewarded by the instant appearance of a fine wooden, dapple-gray horse, far more wonderful and beautiful than the rocking-horse he had so much desired to have, inasmuch as it pranced and curveted as gayly as a living steed, but possessed the advantage of requiring neither stable, groom, nor provender.

The dog did not wait to be thanked, but while Tomlin was engaged in admiring his horse, ran home to his puppies with his basket of cakes.

Not a little surprised were Constantia and Katharina when Tomlin galloped home on his fine dapple-gray charger, around whose neck hung silver bells, which rang out a charming melody that filled the heart with merriment. Not being insensible to the great benefits they had received from the dog, our three young friends resolved to seek out his retreat and prove their gratitude by a daily supply of provisions for himself and his puppies. No trace, however, could they find of any place answering to the silver dog's description of his dwelling, neither did they ever again meet with the little animal himself.

"Ah ! sisters," said little Tomlin, "the silver dog has doubtless gained wisdom by experience, and if he has any more golden hairs at his disposal has learned to employ them for the benefit of his puppies, and no longer scatters them abroad for a few scraps of bread and meat."

THE LUMBER ROOM.

I.

THE LUMBER ROOM.

THERE were once two children, whose names were William and Sarah, but they were better known as Bill and Sally. In many ways they were sensible children, but about one thing they were dreadfully stupid—they did not believe in the Man in the Moon.

One day they were left at home alone, as their parents had to pay a visit a long way off, and these children set to work to play as busily as possible; they played till dinner-time, and as soon as dinner was over they began to play again. At last they thought of a splendid new game, which was to make a real toy shop, and see how all their toys would look when put together; so they hunted about, and brought the dolls, and a wheelbarrow, and a drum, a clockwork mouse, a printing press, and plenty more things, because, being spoiled children, they had no end of toys of every kind.

Well, when it was done it looked splendid, and the children began to play at the shop. Bill was shopman first, and Sally was lots of people coming to buy; and the way they played was, for Sally to buy all the toys and put them at her end of the room, and then Bill would come and buy them all back again.

You can imagine what a nice game this is.

Bill was a sharp, funny boy, and once when he came to buy toys from Sally he asked for a rocking-horse; but he only did this because he knew Sally had none. No sooner had he said it, though, than it struck both of them that it was no fun playing at shops without a rocking-horse; and as there was an old broken one in the lumber-room at the top of the house—where no one ever went—they started off to look for it.

Now, up at the top of the house everything was quiet and still—in fact, if the stairs had not creaked there would have been no sound at all; but the old wooden stair did creak dreadfully, and when Bill and Sally arrived at the lumber-room door, they were so frightened that they did not dare to open it.

Suddenly the door opened by itself, and a gentle-looking old man, with sharp eyes and very untidy hair, peeped out. Sally rushed behind Bill, but the moment she did so the old man caught sight of her, and popped his head in, saying, “How awkward, how very awkward!” and the door was shut again. Then the children looked at each other and grinned; he was evidently a shy old gentleman, and not a bit frightful in any way, only it *was* odd his being there at all.

They opened the door—everything was still. They went in, and saw that there was a soft blue light over everything in the lumber room. There stood the rocking-horse, his tail tied to his neck to replace his mane, which had been lost; cobwebs hung all over him, and in the clear light a perfect shadow of a horse, cobwebs and all, was thrown upon the dusty floor.

No little man was to be seen, so the children hunted about. At last Bill caught Sally by the arm, saying, “Look at that clothes basket!” and

when Sally looked, she exclaimed, "It's wagging about; he must be in it!"

They stood still watching it, and heard a squeaky little voice saying, "This is really the most awkward thing! how very, very distressing!"

Then they went and opened the basket, and, sure enough, there was the little old man crouching in it. You see, he didn't want to be found out.

When he saw they *had* found him, he stood up in the basket, with his thin old hands on the edge, and with his eyes fixed on the ground.

Sally knew it was rude to stand looking at people without speaking; so she began, "It's a very nice day, sir! and we've been playing at a shop."

The old man answered, "Excuse me, little girl, but I have really so little experience of days, that in fact, you know——" Here he became confused, and nearly tumbled into his basket again.

"Bill, say something to him; I think he's afraid of me," whispered Sally.

Bill thought for some time, and at last said, "Why don't you get out of the clothes basket?"

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" was the answer, "you must excuse me; I am so much alone that I get quite stupid when people talk to me—you see, I'm the Man in the Moon. I'm wonderfully amusing when I get over my shyness, but I'm dreadfully, dreadfully shy!"

No sooner did the Man in the Moon tell the children who he was than they went off into fits of laughter which quite shook the dingy old garret, and frightened the spiders back into their holes. When they left off laughing and dancing about, they found that he had got into the bottom of the basket again, and was speaking quite crossly to himself; his voice indeed sounded so angry that they thought

they had better go away, but as they were shutting the door, out came his head again, and he said, "I'm not angry, I'm only hurt; I shall be here again to-morrow evening, and shall be glad to see you again; few people appreciate me, but I'm wonderfully nice."

So the children thought; and the first thing they did was to get hold of their little brother Bob, and tell him all about it; but, unfortunately, they frightened him, and he began to cry. So the nurse came, and told them never to speak of the Man in the Moon again, and like good children they did not; but you may be sure that next evening they stole off to the lumber room to meet their friend again. There he was sitting on the ground, smiling good-naturedly, and polishing his shoe buckles with his pocket-handkerchief.

Bill and Sally sat down, one on each side of him; and the Man in the Moon, after looking at them for a long time, said, "Look here! I'll tell you a very odd thing about me. You know astronomers and telescope fellows think that the *moon* gives light, but that I have nothing to do with it. This is quite wrong. Look out of the window. Do you see the moon?"

"No," said Bill; "because it hasn't risen."

"Nonsense, little boy!" replied the Moon-man testily; "it's because I'm not in it. As long as the moonlight isn't wanted, I go about and amuse myself; but I never let anyone see me then, because it would never do. When it's time for the Moon to rise, I shall have to be off, and you will see me riding through the sky, giving light to all who want it; and to some I will show the road home, and others looking at me will think of absent friends who can see me too. The worst of it is, that so many

people will come out and say poetry to me, and call me, 'O Moon!' and say I am round and bright, or that I shine in the night."

He became quite savage as he spoke, and pulled his watch out of his pocket. It was a very old-fashioned watch, no one knows how or when it was made, but there is one just like it in the Sun, and another on the Earth, and all the planets have them. They never go wrong. Well, the Man in the Moon pulled out his watch, and jumped up.

"Just in time, my dears! I shall only have five minutes to get home, put on my overcoat, and light up the moon." He pointed with his fingers, saying, "Look over there and you will soon see me." The children gazed in the direction of his hand, but when they looked for him again he had gone. You can imagine how surprised they were; and when the Moon rose, which it shortly did, they could clearly see in it their friend's funny old face; and as they went downstairs to bed, Sally thought she heard his voice say, "Awkward! very awkward!" but I think it must have been the creaky stairs.

II.

AN EXCURSION.

THE next night to this Bill and Sally went upstairs again in the evening to the lumber room. They opened the door very quietly, for fear of frightening the Man in the Moon; but when they got in they found it quite dark and quiet, and there was nobody there.

"Where can he have gone, Sally?" said Bill.

"Perhaps he has gone back to the Moon," said Sally.

"Perhaps he hasn't," said the Man in the Moon. For there he was, standing just behind them, with his blue light shining round him, and lighting up all the holes and corners of the room.

Bill and Sally started back in a fright at first; but very soon they recovered; and Bill said to him, "Where did you come from?"

"From the Moon," he answered, and jumped straight into the clothes basket.

"Oh, dear! you've offended him, Bill," said Sally; "perhaps he'll never come out again. Please do come out, sir," she said, going up to the basket; but she got no answer; and so she stood on tiptoe and looked in, and there she saw the Man in the Moon lying curled up at the bottom, and looking quite as frightened as she was.

"You shouldn't ask me such questions," he said in a sad voice when she looked at him; "it hurts my feelings."

"We'll never do it again, if you'll only come out," said Bill and Sally together. And then he came out like a Jack-in-the-box.

"Will you take a walk with me?" he said.

"Where?" asked Sally.

"In the cupboard," said the Man in the Moon.

At this they both began to laugh loudly; but, seeing a pained look on his face, and fearing he would jump into the clothes basket again, they left off; and Bill said, with a polite bow, that they should be very glad to walk with him.

"Do you know what there is in the cupboard?" he said.

"Old clothes," replied Sally.

"Ah, so you think, so you think!" said the Man in the Moon. "Wait a little!" and he rubbed his hands together and laughed to himself, just as if he had said something very funny.

Then he took out of his pocket a key nearly as big as himself, and opened the door of the cupboard where all the old clothes are kept. As soon as he opened it a flood of light burst into the room, so strong that the blue light round the Man in the Moon seemed quite to go out. At the same moment the children heard the sound of waves beating on a beach; and, as soon as they could see plainly—for their eyes were quite dazzled at first—they perceived a beautiful sea stretching before them as far as they could see.

The waves were bright blue, and so was the sky overhead; the sand was fresh and white, and quantities of little white-sailed boats were dancing about on the water, some sailing races with each other, and others lying on the beach, waiting for someone to get into them.

The Man in the Moon laughed again as he saw

how surprised the children looked, and led them down to one of these boats, into which they all three got.

"Can you row?" said the Man in the Moon to Bill.

"Yes," said Bill. But he couldn't; and he didn't know what to do with the oars when he took hold of them.

"Wait a little," said the Man in the Moon; and taking out his big key, he put one end of it into Bill's ear. Click! he gave it a turn, and Bill began rowing as if he had done nothing else all his life.

The boat went on over the beautiful sea, where dolphins with lovely colored skins were playing always on the crests of the waves, till they came to a green island covered with shady groves of trees and tinkling waterfalls. In the middle of this island was what the children thought at first was a mountain; but as they came nearer Sally thought it was very like some things she had seen in her mamma's kitchen, only ever so much bigger; and at last, when they were quite close, she said in a surprised tone, "Why, it's a jelly-mold!"

"Of course it is!" said the Man in the Moon; "that's where the jelly-fish are made."

As they went on the waves grew less blue and the dolphins less gayly colored, and the light seemed to be going out of the sky, till at last there were no dolphins, and the only light left was the strange blue light that always shone round the Man in the Moon; and by this light they saw that they were coming to another island, but instead of being green and bright, it was quite black, and had no middle. It looked just like the rim of a hat without the crown.

"Look over the edge," said the Man in the Moon,

“but don't tumble in, because that would be very awkward.”

So they stood up in the boat and craned over, but they could see nothing but a great black hole.

“That,” said the Man in the Moon, “is where the old moons are kept.”

“Why can't we see them?”

“Because they are gone out,” said the Man in the Moon, quite snappishly.

“Please, sir,” asked Bill, “what are they—made of?” he was going to say, but suddenly felt frightened, and said, “What are they doing there?” instead.

“Waiting,” said the Man in the Moon.

“What for?” asked Sally.

“For ever!” he answered; and the boat went on.

Now the sea began to light up again, but instead of being blue it was gray, and the air, which had been warm before, grew colder and colder. The Man in the Moon took two long cloaks, made of silver paper, out of his pocket, and made Bill and Sally put them on, and, oddly enough, they were as warm as if they had been made of furs.

Now great towers of ice began to float past them—large, glittering cities, with no living thing in them; but through the windows of one of the houses (for there were houses in all of them) they saw a heap of dolls, rocking-horses, and toy figures of every sort lying together. Some were broken into quite little pieces, and some seemed to be struggling to get up.

“Those,” said the Man in the Moon, “are all the broken toys. They are sent out here to mend themselves.”

Presently they saw no more ice towers—nothing but the sea all round.

“Hi!” said the Man in the Moon, and the boat stopped. Then he pulled out his watch. “Oh, dear!” he said, “this is very awkward. I must go back at once, or there will be an eclipse. I meant to have taken you on to the North Pole, but I must go back at once. This is very awkward!”

“But how shall we get back?” asked Sally.

“Oh, get in here!” said the Man in the Moon, and took off his hat, which suddenly became big enough to hold them. As soon as they were in, he put his handkerchief over the top, which made it dark for a moment; then it grew light again, and there they were, in the old-clothes cupboard, with the door open, and the moonlight coming in at the window.

III.

THE MOON DANCE.

WHEN the children went up to the lumber room the next night, there was the Man in the Moon waiting for them.

“Here we are again!” he cried, and began to imitate a clown in a pantomime; but he did it very feebly and badly, so that the children were quite ashamed for him, and he stopped short in the middle of a grimace and turned very red, and said quite humbly: “I can’t do this sort of thing well; I know I can’t; I ought not to have tried it. But there are some things I can do,” he added, brightening up, and began pulling a parcel out of his pocket and untying it.

While he was doing this, Bill and Sally talked to each other in whispers. You must know that they wanted very much to find out what the Moon was made of (Bill said it was made of cheese; Sally said it wasn’t), and had made up their minds to ask the Moon-man, though they both felt afraid to do so. They thought they had better try to put him in good humor first, and so they had got some tea ready for him.

There was a candle-end stuck in a bottle for a chandelier, and there were some broken pieces of plate and some cheese. This was all very well, but they had nothing to drink.

Just as they were asking each other what they

should do, the Moon-man spoke to them. "I knew you were going to ask me to tea," he said, "so I have brought my tea things;" and there, sure enough, was a small table, and a teapot, and a sugar basin, and cups and saucers, and everything you could want, all made of silver paper. The tea, and the bread, and the butter, and the jam were all delicious; and while they were eating, the Moon-man said he would take them another walk if they liked.

Presently Bill took out the cheese they had prepared and held it up to the Moon-man. "Would you like some, sir?" he said.

But the Man in the Moon looked quite shocked. "Oh, dear!" he said, "this is very awkward! Give it to me." And he wrapped it up in one of the silver-paper cups and put it away in his pocket.

Now, thought Bill and Sally, is the time to ask what the Moon is made of; so Sally nudged Bill, and Bill began: "Please, sir, is the——"

"Carriage ready!" interrupted the Moon-man, turning very red and working his fingers about like a railway signal. "Oh, yes! it's been waiting some time. Come along;" and he opened the door of the old-clothes cupboard.

The shelves had all disappeared, as they had the night before; but instead of the sea, and the beach, and the boats, they saw a long road overhung with tall trees stretching out into the distance; and in the middle of the road there was an open carriage, just big enough to hold the three little people—for the Man in the Moon was not much taller than the children. Harnessed to it were four horses, and a tidy groom and coachman were sitting on the box. The groom jumped down and opened the door, and they got in and drove off.

“Why does he call rowing and driving taking a walk?” whispered Sally to Bill.

“Because it is, or might be, a walk at any time, and comes to the same place in the end,” answered the Man in the Moon quite loud.

Soon the carriage stopped, and looking out at the window they saw a quantity of heaps of smoldering ashes on the road. “Little gentleman,” said the Moon-man to Bill, “what is a phoenix?”

Bill happened to know, and was very glad to have an opportunity of showing his knowledge. He paused a little to collect his thoughts.

“Come, come,” said the Moon-man impatiently; “what is it? Is it bounded on the east by the Caspian Sea? Was he a great Roman general? or what?”

“No,” said Bill rather crossly, “a phoenix is a bird that lives a hundred years, and when it dies it is burnt up and a new one comes from the ashes.” Just as he spoke a magnificent bird sprang up from one of the ashheaps, and flew away with its glittering wings over the tops of the trees.

“Is that a phoenix?” asked Sally.

“It is, and it isn’t,” said the Moon-man. “This is where all the poetry is made. Each of these heaps is a poet’s heart, and each of them must be burned before poetry can come out of it. This you can’t understand, but it’s of no consequence. Now, look out at the other window.”

There they saw a crowd of children, who somehow looked more like shadows than real children, playing quite quietly at all sorts of games. None of them spoke or laughed, and among them Bill and Sally saw two very like themselves, who were playing at the game of shops which they had invented.

“These,” said the Moon-man, “are all the old games that you have got tired of. Drive on, coachman!” And they drove on, and on, till they came to the foot of a sloping hill, where they got out.

This hill was laid out in the most lovely gardens, flowers of every color grew there quite wild, such flowers as are generally only seen in green-houses. Tall palm trees rose among them, and bent down their long leaves to whisper to them. In the center of each flower sat a beautiful fairy: the boy fairies were all dressed in bright blue velvet, with silver-braided caps and silver-hilted swords; and the girl fairies in light blue silk, with silver flowers in their hair.

All of them clapped their hands with delight when they saw the Moon-man, and got down out of the flowers to meet him.

Then he turned to Bill and Sally, and asked them if they would like to dance; and, going up a broad flight of marble steps, they came to a great hall with a marble floor, where hundreds of these fairies were dancing to the sound of the most beautiful music, which seemed to come from the roof above. This was not an ordinary roof: it looked more like a thick veil than anything else, and through it there streamed the same sort of blue light which always shone round the Man in the Moon.

Both Bill and Sally found a partner to dance with; but, as Bill was going round the room, his foot struck against something, which, on looking up, he found to be a long ladder, which seemed to stretch beyond the roof. “What is this ladder for!” he asked of his partner, but she put her finger on her lips and began to dance again.

When they stopped, the Man in the Moon came up to Bill and said, “This is a very awkward thing.

I must tell you what you know already. I dare say that the people on the earth only see one side of the Moon, and consequently they think nobody lives in it. This is the other side; and the ladder takes to the side you see. It's time for me to go there, and I'm going up it. On no account follow me, or you will never see me again, and that would be a pity, because, now that I have got over my shyness, I am really a very nice person. Don't you think so?"

But without waiting for an answer, he began to go quickly up the ladder, only stopping a moment to say to Bill, "These little people will take care of you, and send you home."

But Bill felt the greatest curiosity to see what the Moon was made of; and, I am sorry to say, he went to Sally and persuaded her to go up the ladder with him, though all the little people begged him not.

So they went up and up, and when they got to the top step they found a little door in front of them. "Now," said Bill, "we really shall see what the Moon is made of;" and he opened the door and he and Sally went through it; it shut behind them—and there they were in the old clothes cupboard again.

They never saw any more of the Man in the Moon, though they went up into the lumber room very often, and called for him. Once they thought they heard him in the clothes basket, saying to himself, "It's of no consequence;" but when they looked in there was nothing there.

THE STORY OF THE LITTLE POND.

THERE was once upon a time a pretty little brook which went dancing merrily along over bright, shining pebbles the whole long summer day, singing a quiet song to itself, as it kissed the grasses and wild flowers that hung over its banks ; and although, when the winter came, and the sun shone less brightly, the little brook did not look quite so merry, it was still as happy and contented as any little brook could be.

One day in the early spring, when the flowers were just beginning to peep over its banks and look at themselves in its shining water, the little brook felt something stopping up its course, and all the little waves, as they came running down, had to stand and wait till the way was clear again. At last there were so many little waves standing waiting to get on, that, instead of a brook, it looked more like a little pond.

And so it was ; the brook did not know, as we do, that the miller had sent for workmen, and stopped up its way just on purpose to make a pond in which to keep the water for turning his mill.

Now, the little waves soon grew very tired of waiting, and they became very cross and discontented.

“ Oh, dear ! ” cried they, “ how hot the sun is ; and it is so tiresome having to stay here doing nothing ; we have nothing to look at either ; it is so dull ! ”

They had not long to wait, however, before they

had plenty of things to look at; for the fields all round the pond soon filled with haymakers, who at dinner-time came and sat down on the edge of the little pond, and amused themselves by throwing stones into it, and making ducks and drakes all over it.

“Oh, dear!” cried one wave to another, “that stone hurt me very much; I wish I could get away from here and run on as I used to do; I always hoped to get down into that sea that the fishes always told me so much about, but now I am afraid I shall be too late; do let me pass.”

“Don’t push so,” said the other waves; “you are no worse off than we are.”

And they all began to grumble and quarrel, and to wish for something different from what they had.

Now the sun got hotter and hotter from day to day; flies began to skim over the face of the water, and all kinds of thirsty animals came to drink it up; the cows, too, came and stood in it to cool themselves; and the wind lay quite tired, and could not even blow the slightest breeze. The poor little pond grew smaller and smaller every day, and the waves cried out, faintly, very often:

“Oh, dear! this is dreadful! we can’t stand the heat of the sun, and these horrid flies will not leave us any peace! And then, as if the flies were not plague enough, that large four-legged beast must come and stand among us, and make us all so thick and muddy! How we wish the sun would not shine so!”

At last, just before the pond was quite dried up, clouds came up and covered all the sky, and the cold rain-drops began to fall and make great splashes on the top of the water. The plowmen, at work in the fields, came down with their horses to the side of

it, and washed the mud off their feet, and let them drink great draughts of the water. The wind, too, began to blow, and covered all the face of the pond with ripples, so that it looked quite black and gloomy, and felt so chilly and miserable.

Then all the little waves cried out, and said: "We would far rather have the nice warm sunshine and flies than this cold, dreary rain!" But still it grew colder from day to day; the leaves fell off the trees, and the little birds sang no more.

One night the little waves were very, very cold; they had never been so cold before; and they felt themselves growing stiffer and stiffer, till at last they were so cold and stiff that even the strong rough wind could not move them. They were quite hard frozen.

When the morning came they heard the sound of voices, and laughter, and children came down to the edge of the pond. The poor little frozen waves wondered what they were going to do, and quite forgot to grumble while they watched them.

All of a sudden a little boy put his foot upon the pond, but instead of stirring up mud, as the horses and cows had done, he began to run very fast on the top of the poor little waves, cutting long scratches all over them with a sharp knife which he had fastened to his feet, and on which he balanced himself as he ran.

Then came more boys and girls, and men and women, who all ran about on sharp knives up and down over the pond; and as they flew along laughing and shouting, the poor little waves groaned and cried; and all they could say was:

"Oh! we never felt anything so bad as this before!" and then they groaned and cried again.

All day long, and for many days, did these people

come and run about on the pond; and the poor little waves were so miserable that at last they began to think that all this pain was meant to punish them for being so unhappy, and complaining so much of the sun and the flies, the thirsty horses, and the cold wind and rain, and they grew very sorry that ever they had been so naughty and discontented.

One evening, after everything was still, and everyone was gone away for the night, the sky grew very black, and something white began to fall from it. It came quietly, gently down on the poor little scratched face of the pond, and lay there, very soft and very cold; and soon the little waves could see nothing more, for it was quite dark.

After lying quietly for some time, they heard voices, which they thought they knew, saying:

“Oh, look here! what a pity! here is the tiresome snow come, and it has spoiled all our skating!”

The kind snow lay upon the poor little pond for many days, and kept the skaters from hurting it any more, till the sun grew warmer and melted it away; then the little waves grew soft again as they were before, and no one could stand upon them any more.

Then they were so happy; and as the sun shone upon them and made them warm again, they all sang for joy; and they never grumbled any more; for they said:

“It is of no use to make ourselves unhappy about small things; we know now what it is to have something real to grumble about.”

WHAT THE ANIMALS SAID.

I ONCE knew a little girl who loved all kinds of birds, beasts, and fishes, and who never lost any chance of showing them kindness in some form or other. I think there must have been something in her look which told the poor dumb beasts and birds how she loved them, for, instead of running or flying away, as though scared at her approach, they used to come up to her, and look into her little eyes, as if asking to be fondled.

I have seen her returning home with a troop of poor hungry dogs at her heels, some of whom had lost their masters, and others had run away from theirs in disgust at the ill-treatment they had received while in their service. She would put by daily a part of her little breakfast, and would save every week a part of her pocket money, to minister to the comforts of her poor favorites. Nor were they ungrateful, as you may well believe. After satisfying their hunger, they would bark such a chorus of thankfulness as is rarely heard outside of the Isle of Dogs, and would accompany their kind little friend—an unpaid bodyguard—on her way to school, and wait outside to escort her home again.

They were good, sensible dogs, and never barked or made any noise while school was going on, excepting upon one occasion, when they fancied that Mary (that was the name of the good little girl) was being punished for not knowing her lesson, when in they walked without knocking—the New-

its while to express a wish that such a calamity might be averted from her.

Mary then walked on to the lion's cage, but could not help returning to look at the elephant, on seeing the crowds who flocked around to feed it, and hearing the different remarks that they made and the "Humphs" that fell from its lips and trunk. One gave it a turnip, one an apple, one a lump of sugar, another a bit of bread, all of which it took in its trunk and put into its mouth. A wag offered it a newspaper; but I suppose it found literature hard to digest, as it not only rejected the proffered gift with scorn, but struck the wag over the head with its trunk, staving in his hat. Now the hat was a new one, and had cost nine-and-sixpence.

There was a little elephant in the same stall as the large one, its mother, and Mary was much amused at hearing the different remarks with which the old one edified the young one. "See, my dear," said she, "how infinitely superior we are to you crowd of idle gazers, who call themselves human beings! How simple is our life compared to theirs! Before you were born, many years ago, I used to roam the jungles of an island called Ceylon, in company with your dear father and uncles and aunts. I had one day wandered away from home (for I was then young and thoughtless) in search of a bit of sugar cane for lunch, or tiffin, as we used to call it, when I found myself surrounded by a crowd of men, who bound me, set me on a bullock cart, and took me to a seaport. Here I was put on board a horrid prison, called a ship, and transported to England. It is a hard thing, my dear, to be in the power of beings that you absolutely despise, as I most justly do mankind. Consider how helpless they are by nature! We with our trunks can pick up a pin

or pull down a forest tree! they cannot even build a bridge from Dover to Calais. We can enjoy and thrive upon a diet of simple food, such as rice and vegetables; they not only eat, in my opinion, a great deal too much food of every kind, but also spoil the little digestion they have by the use of strong drinks, and then they call a man who takes an extra dose of such drinks 'a beast,' forsooth, as if any of us would have ever hit upon the idea of making or using any strong drink at all. It is impossible to think of any more complete misnomer."

Now, Mary didn't know anyone of the name of "Miss Nomer," so she thought either that the elephant must have made some mistake, or that it must be an elephantine name for some strong drink.

The elephant went on to describe the hundred different ills that human flesh was heir to—such as bills, creditors, duns, east winds, colds, bad cooks, barrel organs, politics, and many other evils of that sort from all of which, as she justly remarked, the beast creation were free. She said she had seen a list of above a hundred of such complaints, but had forgotten their names; but she was glad to say that there was a gentleman who professed to be able to cure them all with some remedy or other, which she had read of in an advertisement sheet of a paper in which some sweetmeats had been wrapped up. She then described how men fight and quarrel with each other in a way that beasts would be ashamed to do. Thousands and hundreds of thousands of people, with spikes on their heads, and blue coats, under the command of a person called a king, would go and fire at hundreds and thousands of people in red trousers, commanded by a man called an emperor, till it was decided whether a piece of rag marked black and white, or another marked

with red, white, and blue, should be stuck upon sticks all over a certain piece of ground.

When the fight was over, as many as were not killed would return to their respective homes—that is, provided such homes had not been burned down during the war; but, as soon as the red-white-and-blue-rag people felt themselves strong enough to replace their rag on the piece of debatable land they would scorn all thought of the untold agony inflicted upon thousands of the human race, and proceed to attack their foes anew.

“Now, with us, my dear,” said the elephant, “the case used to be quite different. The only fights that we ever had were between two champion elephants who were in love with the same fair beast and wished to make her their bride. And even in this case, I used to say that they would have done far better to toss up for the prize; or, what would have been, perhaps, more satisfactory to the bride in question, to have let her choose for herself.

“Again, look how defenseless are mankind against the weather when compared with us. See how they have fallen off from their original state. I make no doubt myself that they were once covered with hair, much as the monkeys of the present day are now, and that they possessed the gift of instinct which never errs, instead of the inferior gift of reason which leads mankind so often astray. I am glad, however, to see that men are doing their best to imitate the beast creation in respect of their clothes: the numerous furs and seal skins which I observe on the richer portion of my spectators show that mankind are aware of the fact that there are at least some points in which they will do well to imitate us.”

The elephant, I suppose, here found that she was

getting somewhat prosy, for little Mary began to get weary; so the wise beast deliberately swallowed a turnip, top and all, winked, raised its trunk, humphed, and withdrew.

Mary then visited the other beasts in turn: and found that she learned something from each of their discourses. She was, perhaps, most surprised at the powers of the ostrich. In five minutes this wonderful bird swallowed six nails, eight pebbles, a bit of glass, the advertisement sheet of the *Times*, and a cotton glove.

Mary wondered at all this, not unnaturally; but the ostrich explained that it had no wings, and was therefore obliged to amuse itself with other pursuits than flying. It was determined to benefit its species, and was therefore engaged in a series of interesting observations on the digestion, which it intended to publish as soon as some one should have found means to reduce the language of birds to writing. It added, however, that it considered nails fully as digestible and healthy as a great many dishes consumed and enjoyed by the human race; more so than lobster salad, cold patties, and in fact than any of the refreshments ordinarily provided at railway stations for hungry passengers. The ostrich explained that it wished to convey by this insinuation no reproach against the lobster, of which crustacean it had not the acquaintance, there being very few of such to be found in the desert. It was sure, however, that the lobster would rather not be digested at all. Mary was not quite sure what the ostrich meant by a "crustacean" or an "insinuation," but imagined that they were some kind of strange animal, whose acquaintance she would probably make further on.

Mary could not help pausing before the cage

where the owl was confined, and admiring its glossy feathers and large expressive eyes. She had always heard this bird spoken of as the bird of wisdom, and therefore approached its cage not without some degree of awe.

“Good morning, my lord,” said she by way of greeting; for she knew that it was usual thus to address a judge, whom she had always heard of as the possessor of the greatest wisdom on earth. But to her surprise she received no answer, though she repeated her greeting several times in a loud voice. She even put her mouth to his lordship’s ear and shouted with all her might, “My lord! my lord!” and then “You owl! you owl!” in turn. But his owlship merely winked and winked, and looked like a judge who has slept through the arguments of both sides impartially, and is now making up his mind as to which of the contending parties has the weakest case. Hence she was driven to conclude that neither a wig nor large eyes always denote wisdom. Even these large eyes, so far from always being an advantage to the bird, in many cases, Mary thought, must be a drawback. For she could not help noticing that when he had once fixed his eyes upon any object, he had great difficulty in taking them off again. Indeed, a parrot, who was in the next cage, confided to her that in America numerous owls are caught in this manner; a professional owl-catcher comes to a tree where he knows one of these birds to be sitting, and after catching its eye, walks slowly round the tree. After about ten turns or so the poor owl, following the man with his eyes, begins to feel uncomfortable, and after about ten more it experiences a great difficulty in breathing. At last, it actually drops from its perch and gasps for

breath. It is with difficulty restored to health with chicken broth and various other cordials.

Perhaps I may tell you another day of all the curious information regarding men and women that she picked up from other beasts and birds ; how she admired the patience of one, the grace of a second, the majesty of a third ; and finally returned home, more resolved than ever to continue, as she had always been, the warm friend of every beast and bird that exists.

THE STORY OF LITTLE MAGGIE.

THERE was once a little girl called Maggie. She had no father or mother, and no home to live in; very ragged clothes, no shoes, and no hat; she always put a little tattered shawl over her head when the sun shone too hot, or the wind blew too cold.

Now, although she had no mother to teach her what was right and what was wrong, she was a very good little girl, and never stole anything, or told any falsehoods; she was very kind to all the animals she saw, and never teased or hurt any living creature.

This little girl was wandering about, one fine summer evening, trying to find some place where she might sleep all night, when she came to the gate of a large farmyard, and stopped timidly, before she opened it to go in.

Suddenly a large rough, black dog rushed out of the barn, and began barking so fiercely that poor little Maggie was quite frightened, and ran away as fast as her little legs could carry her. When she had quite got out of hearing of the big dog she stopped to rest herself and think what she should do next; but while she was thinking (she was very tired, and had wandered a long, long way that day), she laid her poor little head down on the bank, and fell fast asleep.

Now the place where Maggie was lying was a pretty lane with a high bank and hedge on one side

of it, while on the other side ran a little stream, with a fence and a green meadow beyond it. The bank was quite covered with wild flowers, and made the prettiest, softest bed for the little girl, while the long branches of wild roses and honeysuckles, that hung out of the hedge over her head, made curtains such as neither you nor I ever slept under.

Little Maggie lay and slept here, quite soundly; the moon and all the stars shone over her head, but she knew nothing of it all.

Just before the sun rose she was roused by the sound of little voices, just like silver bells, and, opening her eyes she saw hundreds of little boys and girls all round her, very busily at work, and very merry. Maggie had never seen any children like these before, so she lay quite still and watched them and listened to what they said.

The little boys were all dressed in green, with little silver caps on their heads, and little silver belts round their waists; the girls wore frocks made of wild rose leaves, some pink, some white, and some deep red; little silver belts and shoes, and little hats, each made of a wild heart's-ease.

These little people were all chattering away as fast as they could, and each of them was doing something to a flower blossom. The little girls had brooms made of field-mouse hair; and with these they were busy sweeping away the dust from the pretty bright flowers. The boys had harder brushes, and were cleaning the green leaves of the plants and the blades of grass.

“Oh, my poor little Daisy!” cried one of the little girls, “how dirty you are this morning; I was sure you would be so, when I saw Farmer Jones drive past yesterday in his gig; the dust flew up so that I could see nothing for ever so long after. How

troublesome these human beings are, Pimpernel, are they not?"

"Yes, indeed!" said Pimpernel, who was carefully straightening out the leaves of her little red flower; "only the other day my child was so thickly covered with dust that when she knew there was rain coming, and that she ought to shut up, her petals were too much clogged for her to be able to do it. Tom the shepherd came past, and looked at her, and said cheerily, "Oh, there is no chance of rain, the Pimpernel is wide open, so I can leave my lambs out all night." He did leave them out, and I heard from Cowslip, over in the meadow there, that they cried all night and were so cold!"

"Take care, Roseleaf," cried Wood-sorrel; "you are sweeping down all your dust on my child, so that as fast as I brush her clean, she gets covered with dust again."

"I have just finished," said Roseleaf; "I have such a lovely bud to open to-day; it will quite astonish the queen when she comes!"

When the children had done sweeping their flowers clean, they all went to the brook, and filling a dockleaf with water, they carried it over to their flower bank; then they gave each flower a little, and sprinkled what was left over the grass and leaves.

They had just finished this work when a little boy, perched on the tallest branch of the hedge, waved his silver cap in the air and shouted, "Hurrah! the queen is coming!"

The girls put up their brushes and smoothed their aprons, made of the petals of lilies of the valley, and the boys climbed up the highest plants to look out for her majesty's carriage.

Soon it came, drawn through the air by twelve blue butterflies, and a crowd of fairies and elves

flew after it. It stopped close beside Maggie and the queen stepped out. As she did so, the little boys and girls made their best bows and courtesies.

Then the queen began to look at the flowers.

"Daisy," she said, "your child is quite pale this morning; what has happened to her?"

"Please your majesty," answered Daisy, "she was so covered with dust yesterday that she could hardly breathe, and nearly fainted, just before I began to wash her, and that is why she looks so pale; but she is better now."

"The mortals have been at work again, I suppose," said the queen angrily; "Farmer Jones and his gig are to blame, are they not?"

"Yes, your majesty; they do us all a great deal of mischief."

"Indeed they do," chimed in a dozen or two of other little girls.

The queen stood and thought for a moment, and then called aloud, "Ruby!"

A pretty little fairy man flew up at once, and stood with a paint brush and palette in his hand, and made a low bow to the queen.

"Take your brush and make my pretty Daisy look better, Ruby," said she.

The painter again bowed low, and set to work to touch the ends of the Daisy's little white petals with the most delicate crimson, stepping back every now and then, with his head on one side, to look at his work, till he had made the Daisy look exquisite.

"Oh, Roseleaf! what a lovely bud you have brought out to-day!" exclaimed the queen, flying on to the spray of roses, which Maggie had noticed before; "but where are all those flowers you had yesterday. There were six here, I think."

“Yes, your majesty,” replied Roseleaf; “but your majesty’s court dressmaker came to me and said she required some velvet to make dresses for their royal highnesses, the three princesses, so I gave her the petals of those six roses, they were so beautiful; and here are the remains of them, going to turn into seeds.”

“That was quite right,” said the queen. Then she added, speaking half to herself: “They needed to have pretty dresses in which to go to Prince Dragon-fly’s ball, but still it is very sad to have to use such lovely flowers to make them.”

After visiting many more flowers, and talking to the little girls that took care of them, and sometimes passing her hand over a leaf or a blade of grass, to see if the boys had done their work properly, the queen came to some little girls whom Maggie had not noticed before. They were sitting quite still, crying as if their hearts would break; and beside them lay some broken and withered white flowers.

“Alas!” cried they, as the queen came near them, “see what mischief has been done here to our dear little children. We have taken such care of them all this summer, and we did hope soon to have some lovely ripe strawberries to present to your majesty; but yesterday a little girl came by; and she caught sight of our dear little flowers on the top of the bank, and rushed at them with a cry of joy, and broke them off; there is only one left, and it is badly hurt.”

The queen drew herself up and looked very sad and very angry. At last she said: “I could forgive these mortals for throwing dust over my flowers. for they do not know any better; but they know quite well that when they break off a strawberry flower they take away the food from one of my

fairy children ; and besides that, they do not remember that we fairies love our little flower children, and that it grieves us to see them broken and hurt."

Maggie was so much interested in all that she saw and heard, and so sorry for the little fairies, that she started up and cried out :

" Oh ! please your majesty, it was not I that touched the strawberry flowers ; and I will never, never gather one ; I did not know that it made the fairies so sorry ! "

At the sound of her voice all the fairies disappeared, and although Maggie rubbed her eyes very hard indeed, she could see nothing more of them ; only the flowers and leaves and grass were left, the bright sun was just rising above the meadow, and it was broad daylight.

A STORY ABOUT A WASP.

IN a storeroom which was full, as most store-rooms are, of sugar and jam and all sorts of sweet things, numbers of wasps were flying and buzzing about. The lady to whom the store-room belonged had gone bravely among them and driven many of them out at the window, but for each one that she drove away, or killed, two new ones seemed to spring up, and at last she gave it up in despair, and left them to fly and buzz as much as they liked.

In the very middle of the room stood a large bottle with no cork in it, and with a more delicious smell coming from it than came from the jams or other nice things that stood on the shelves. One would think that the wasps would have crowded to this; it seemed so pleasant, and so easy to get in at the open neck of the bottle and feast on the sweets inside. But not a single wasp went near it, and the reason of this you will presently see.

There was, however, one young wasp, who, because his waist was a little slimmer than most wasps' waists, thought that he was the cleverest wasp that had ever lived. It came into his silly head that it was mere folly in the others not to go into this bottle, and though his father and his uncles all begged him not to go near it, he made up his mind that he would, and gave his wings a shake and began flying toward it.

All the friends he possessed stopped and said

a word or two to him. "It's a pity you won't take good advice," said one. "I always thought his conceit would bring him to a bad end," said another. "Good-by," said another. But he paid no attention, and flew to the bottle and perched on the edge. The smell which came up from it was like that of hundreds of honey-pots.

"Ho, ho!" said the wasp, "I'm in luck; now I shall be able to laugh at all the others;" and down the neck of the bottle he flew, but no sooner had his foot touched the honey, as he thought it was, inside, than he found he could not move it away again. It seemed fixed. He put his other feet down to get it out, but they became fixed too—then his wings—then his head—until he was quite fixed in the trap, for that is what the bottle was. There he was stuck fast, and there he is still.

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